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DARK PLACES

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Septembre 2012

OPENING CREDITS

The first cards of the opening credits flash in silence. Gradually we perceive the murmur of play in a schoolyard. The words of a nursery rhyme elevate, expressing a cruelty only children are capable of.

SINGING CHILDREN

*The Days were a clan that mighta lived
long... But Ben Day's head got screwed
on wrong... That boy craved dark
Satanic power... So he killed his
family in one nasty hour... Little
Michelle he strangled in the night...
Then shot dear Debby: a bloody
sight... He saved for last poor Patty
his Mommy... Chopped her up like a big
salam!*

The murmur and chanting turn into mocking laughter. END OF CREDITS.

CBS NEWS SPECIAL REPORT - 1985

ANCHORMAN

Emotions running deep throughout the country this morning, as the gruesome details of the terrible tragedy that took place last night on a Kansas farm come to light...

The picture of a woman standing in a field with her three young daughters, all smiles. Happy times. Both the mother and the youngest girl are redheads.

ANCHORMAN (CONT'D)

Thirty-five year old farmer Patty Day was savagely murdered, along with her daughters Michelle and Debby... The youngest, Libby, was miraculously found alive. She is seven-years old.

CUT TO the picture of Ben Day. He is a fresh-faced teenager with hair as red as Libby's.

ANCHORMAN (CONT'D)

The FBI is now actively looking for Benjamin, 16, who's missing and is being considered the prime suspect for what appears to be a satanic crime.

BLACK.

Silence. From the darkness comes a kind, male voice.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)

Libby, what you're about to tell us now is very, very important.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

The bandaged feet of a child dangle above a white tiled floor. Blood has soaked through the wrapping. The camera tilts up, revealing YOUNG LIBBY who sits on a hospital bed.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)
Did Ben kill your mom and your sisters?

She stays silent.

DETECTIVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You were in the house when it happened, right?

Libby nods.

DETECTIVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
So tell us what happened... Was it Ben? Did he kill them?

Libby lowers her eyes and finally nods in agreement.

INT. LIBBY'S CAR - DAY

CUT TO the hardened face of a thirtysomething woman with white-blond hair and freckles. She smokes a cigarette in her parked car.

LIBBY (V.O.)
I have a meanness inside me, real as an organ. Slit me at my belly and it might slide out, meaty and dark, drop on the floor so you could stomp on it...
(a beat)
It's the Day blood. Something's wrong with it.

Title card: **LIBBY DAY, TODAY.**

EXT. OUTSIDE PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Libby gets out of her car and walks toward an old-school Kansas City steakhouse. The leather jacket and black jeans she wears are intentionally off-putting.

LIBBY (V.O.)
I was never a good little girl, and I got worse after the murders. I can feel a better version of me though... A less cynical Libby that's telling me to get up, do something, try harder, move on... But the meanness usually wins out.

She walks into the restaurant.

INT. KANSAS CITY STEAKHOUSE - AFTERNOON

The place is reasonably full. Libby scans the room.

*LIBBY (V.O.)
When I turned eighteen, I inherited
\$321,374, the result of those well-
wishers who'd read about my sad story.
I'd lived off that cash for more than
thirteen years, but it was almost
gone.*

She makes for the bar where JIM JEFFREYS, a stiff, fifty year old man, sits alone. Jim smiles as he spots Libby and rises to greet her.

*LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I had a meeting that afternoon to
determine exactly how gone.*

INT. KANSAS CITY STEAKHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Libby and Jim Jeffreys sit in a red leather booth. Libby, barely touching her stuffed baked potato, observes Jim devouring his steak.

*LIBBY (V.O.)
Jim Jeffreys is an early-bird eater
and a bigot. He has the patience and
optimism of those who think Jesus is
watching.*

Jim puts fork and knife down, wipes his mouth.

JIM JEFFREYS
Well, Libby, we are entering a very
new, very different stage here
together.

LIBBY
How much is left?

JIM JEFFREYS
Do you read those reports I send you?

LIBBY
Sometimes.

JIM JEFFREYS
Have you at least listened to my
messages?

LIBBY
I think your cell phone is messed up.
It cuts out a lot.

Jim sighs pointedly.

JIM JEFFREYS
There is nine hundred eighty-two
dollars and twelve cents left in the
fund.
(Libby pulls a face)
(MORE)

JIM JEFFREYS (CONT'D)
As I've mentioned before, had you been able to replenish it with any kind of regular income, we'd have been able to keep it afloat, but...

He shrugs with his hands and grimaces.

LIBBY
What about the book?

Jim shakes his head.

LIBBY (CONT'D)
It seems like it should have made more money.

JIM JEFFREYS
I know.

Libby mindlessly plays with a silver salt shaker.

LIBBY
What about new donations? The twenty-fifth anniversary is coming up.

Jim shakes his head again.

JIM JEFFREYS
People have short attention spans. And there's always a new murder, I'm afraid. They want to help other little girls. And you... well, you're not a little girl anymore.

Libby stares at him.

LIBBY
I'm not ready for this.

JIM JEFFREYS
I know... But in a way it could be a blessing in disguise and lead you to a really exciting new phase of your life...
(charming)
What do you want to be when you grow up?

Jim pulls something from the inside pocket of his jacket and lays it on the table: three pieces of mail.

Annoyed, Libby looks at the three letters.

LIBBY (V.O.)
In the past Jim Jeffreys used to hand me bulging shoe boxes full of mail, most of them letters with checks inside... I'd sign the check over to him, and then the donor would receive a form letter in my blocky handwriting.

BLACK.

Thank you for your donation. It is people like you who let me look forward to a brighter future...

Yours truly, Libby Day.

EXT. DAYS FARM - MORNING

The sun rises on a small, isolated farm. Around the property, all is snow white, immaculate. We hear the eerie hiss of an icy wind.

INT. DAYS FARM , PATTY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Libby's mother, PATTY, lays on her bed, eyes wide open, as a ruckus escalates from somewhere outside the house. She looks exhausted.

Title card: PATTY DAY, JANUARY 2nd 1985, 7:45 AM

Reaching for the ruby cross on the nightstand, Patty clasps its gold chain around her neck and musters the courage to get out of bed.

INT. DAYS FARM , KITCHEN - LATER

Patty fixes blueberry pancakes in the modest-looking kitchen. Squeals from the girls at play outside. Patty peeks out the window, watching MICHELLE, 11 years old, and DEBBY, age 9, build a snow fort. Young Libby, who had been off to the side, swiftly approaches the fort and levels it. Her sisters scream in horror and start running after her.

A door creaks from the back of the house. Patty tenses up. Footfall of heavy boots approaching. BEN, 16 years old, appears, dark denim jacket, black jeans, hunter boots, and a thermal hat pulled down low. Despite this garb, Ben is a good-looking teenager.

BEN
(without looking)
Hi Mom.

He aims directly for the door.

PATTY
What about breakfast?

He stops in his tracks.

BEN
I hate pancakes. You know that.

PATTY
I'll make you something else. Sit.

A stare down. Ben gives in, slumping into a chair. She goes back to cooking.

PATTY (CONT'D)
So what are you up to today?

He doesn't answer and fiddles with the salt shaker, pouring the granules on the table. She's about to chastise him when the girls storm into the house, tracking snow all over.

PATTY (CONT'D)

Girls, take your shoes off!

Bickering, Michelle and Debby ignore her. Libby unobtrusively slides into the chair next to Ben.

YOUNG LIBBY

Hey, Ben.

BEN

Hey, Libby.

She stares at him playing with the salt.

YOUNG LIBBY

I like your salt mountain.

Patty catches a smile on Ben's face. Michelle and Debby continue squabbling as they come to sit at the table. Michelle sees the salt pile.

MICHELLE

Mom, Ben's making a mess!

Ben retreats into his shell.

PATTY

It's fine, sweetie... Ben, eggs?

Ben nods. Patty breaks two eggs in a pan.

DEBBY

Why does Ben get eggs?

YOUNG LIBBY

Ben needs eggs 'cause he's a boy. A man.

Patty piles the cakes onto a plate. An officious Michelle surveys the table.

MICHELLE

Mom, Debby has her elbows on the table. And Libby didn't wash her hands!

YOUNG LIBBY

(laughing)

Nobody did.

Ben pokes Libby in her side, making her laugh harder.

BEN

Dirty booger.

YOUNG LIBBY

Mother hugger.

MICHELLE

Mom, Ben needs to take off his hat!

Patty nods as she serves them.

PATTY

Ben does need to take off his hat.

All eyes on Ben, who does not react. Patty stops plating the pancakes.

PATTY (CONT'D)

(gentle but firm)

Ben?

Ben finally removes his hat, revealing a jet-black crown of hair. Michelle screams, Debby starts sobbing.

PATTY (CONT'D)

Ben, sweetheart... Why? You were so handsome.

Ben stands up, defiant.

BEN

It's just hair. I'll be back later.

He walks out and quietly closes the door, leaving his puzzled family behind.

INT. LIBBY'S HOUSE , MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Grown up Libby enters her dark house. She turns on the light. Her home is a hodgepodge, a random collection of useless trinkets that crowd tables and bureaus.

LIBBY (V.O.)

I had to be honest with myself...

She pulls an object from her pocket and places it on a tray among tabletop items: it is the silver salt shaker from the steakhouse.

LIBBY (V.O.)

Even if I cut my food spending in half, if I kept the heaters off and only used my car when absolutely necessary, I'd still get kicked out of my house in three or four months...

She goes to sit in a worn-out yellow couch and sets the letters Jim Jeffreys gave her on the table.

LIBBY (V.O.)

I was looking at a real job, real soon. Problem is, I'm not someone who can be depended on five days a week.

Libby picks one letter at random and opens it.

LIBBY (V.O.)

I don't even get out of bed five days in a row.

Libby peruses the letter, intrigued.

INT. LIBBY'S HOUSE , LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Libby picks up a phone and dials a number from the letter. Two rings, then somebody picks up on the other end, but says nothing.

LIBBY
(wary)
Hello?

LYLE (O.S.)
Who's this?

LIBBY
Is, is this Lyle Wirth?

LYLE (O.S.)
Who's asking?

She hesitates.

LIBBY
This is Libby Day. You wrote me.

LYLE (O.S.)
Ohhhh, holy cow! Really? Libby Day?
Are you in town?

LIBBY
Which town?

LYLE (O.S.)
You're in Kansas City? That's where
you live, right?

Libby takes the receiver away from her ear, ready to hang up.

LYLE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hello? Hel-ooo-o?

She gets back on.

LIBBY
Yes, I live in Kansas City. Your
offer, is it serious?

INT. PUB - NIGHT

LIBBY (V.O.)
*Lyle Wirth looked like a serial
killer. Which meant he probably wasn't
one.*

Sitting at a table, LYLE, late twenties, suspiciously stares at Libby standing in front of him.

LYLE
Your hair's blonde!

LIBBY
I hate people who start conversations
with facts.

Lyle gets up and extends his hand, smiling.

LYLE
Sorry, I wasn't expecting it... Lyle.

She doesn't shake his hand but sits at the table. The pub isn't busy, just some old-timers watching a baseball game. Libby signals a tired, miniskirted waitress.

LIBBY
PBR, please.

The waitress nods and Libby gets straight to the point.

LIBBY (CONT'D)
So what's with this club?

LYLE
(nervous)
Well, you know how some guys collect
baseball cards?

Libby gives him nothing.

LYLE (CONT'D)
Or women read gossip magazines and
they know everything about some actor,
like their baby's name and the town
they grew up in?

Considering Libby's icy look, Lyle cuts to the chase.

LYLE (CONT'D)
Well... this is like that, but we call
it the Kill Club.

The waitress sets down the beer. Libby doesn't touch it.

LYLE (CONT'D)
It's not as weird as it sounds.

LIBBY
Sounds pretty fucking weird.

Libby takes a slug of her drink.

LYLE
This club is a bunch of people who
like mysteries, true-crimes. Everyone
has a crime that they're passionate
about...
(excited)
But you and your family - very
special. Huge with the club.

Noticing her scowl, he changes his tone.

LYLE (CONT'D)

I mean, it's a real tragedy, what happened. And your brother in jail, now going on twenty-five years...

He sucks on a piece of milky ice fished out from his drink.

LIBBY

So these are a bunch of freaks who want to convince me Ben's innocent?

LYLE

No. You'd just come to... it's like a convention almost, and you'd let us pick your brain.

LIBBY

How much?

LYLE

Five hundred dollars. And there'll be a lot of collectors there, so bring any souvenirs from your childhood you might want to sell...

They hold each other's gaze.

LIBBY

A thousand.

LYLE

I could give you seven hundred.

Libby glances around the room, swigs her PBR, sets the empty can back down, sighing.

LIBBY

Deal.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Winter-white landscape. The horizon line merges with the sky. A bike enters frame, disrupting this odd harmony.

Ben is free-spinning over ice, the wheels of his bike shimmying, when he suddenly hits a patch of dirt. The front wheel veers completely to the left, making him fall sideways. He lies on the ground, stunned, a line of blood trickling from the arch of his right eyebrow.

Title card: BEN DAY, JANUARY 2nd 1985, 8:25 AM

EXT. KINNAKEE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Ben now pedals up to Kinnakee High School. He looks around the half-empty parking lot: pickup trucks and beat-up sports cars. He continues toward the back of the building, attaches his bike to a railing. From inside the school, he perceives indiscernible sounds. A single long yell emerges, like a battle cry: "Coooooper! Hold up!".

INT. KINNAKEE HIGH SCHOOL , LOCKER ROOMS - DAY

Ben comes into the locker rooms. The sounds of slapping tennis shoes and bouncing basketballs pervade. He looks around to make sure no one is watching, then peers into the lockers that have been left open. In one, an elegant leather bag, hanging loosely from a hook, catches his eye. He looks around to check if anyone is watching, then opens the bag.

MR. GRUGER (O.S.)

Hey!

Ben quickly turns around. MR. GRUGER, fifties, a strong-built man in a tracksuit, stands before him, furious.

BEN

Hi Mr. Gruger.

MR. GRUGER

What the hell do you think you're doing in that locker?

Ben's cheeks flush. He cannot answer. Mr. Gruger gets in his face.

MR. GRUGER (CONT'D)

I said, why were you in that locker?
You trying to steal something?

BEN

No. I just wanted...

(a beat)

I thought I saw matches... I wanted a cigarette.

Mr. Gruger slowly sizes Ben up.

MR. GRUGER

You're the janitor boy, right?
Something Day?

BEN

I go to school here. The cleaning,
it's just... for money.

MR. GRUGER

(contemptuous)

You dyed your hair?

Ben doesn't answer, holding Mr. Gruger's gaze.

MR. GRUGER (CONT'D)

Go clean somewhere else. And don't
come back in here til we're gone. You
are not welcome here, you understand?

Ben lowers his head and goes to leave.

MR. GRUGER (CONT'D)

Why don't you say it out loud, just so
we're clear!

Ben slows down. Five members of the varsity basketball stand at the locker room's entrance, blocking his passage, snickering. He eventually forces his way through.

BEN
I'm not welcome here.

EXT. KANSAS CITY'S WEST BOTTOMS - NIGHT

A car rolls through the quiet and gloomy streets of what used to be an industrial district. Now it looks more like a ghost town.

Behind the wheel, Libby looks at the tall, quiet, brick buildings, bearing rusty signs of companies that no longer exist.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*It wasn't the first time I'd been
offered money for conferences or
meetings...*

The car stops in front of a three-story building. With no evidence of life from inside the building, Libby hesitates to leave her car.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*Not to mention the stir caused by this
picture of me in the book about the
Prairie Massacre...*

A picture of Libby appears and fills half of the screen. She's smiling to the camera, innocent.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*... seventeen, my wobbly, woman-
breasts barely contained by a white-
trash halter top, and this caption...*

The words **Baby Day grows up** are inked on the bottom half of the screen.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*As a result, I'd received several
propositions from nudie mags, none of
them offering enough money to make me
seriously consider.*

EXT. OUTSIDE THE TALLMAN CORPORATION - NIGHT

Libby climbs the soiled marble stairs that lead to the building's entrance. Music echoes, its origin unknown. She knocks on the heavy metal door. Nothing. She knocks a second time. Still nothing. She then tries to open the door and...

INT. TALLMAN CORPORATION BUILDING - NIGHT

... enters a large, crowded, windowless room. Competing sounds of organ music and heavy metal. Two hundred people of all ages, mostly men, some of them in costume. The room is divided into rows of booths created from chain-link fencing.

A man with a waistcoat and a tall black hat pushes past Libby and shoves a bag of candies under her nose.

MAN - FREDERICK BAKER LOOK-ALIKE
Want some sweets, little girl?

She defiantly ignores him. He roars with laughter and moves on.

Rattled, Libby is relieved to spot Lyle across the room. As he makes his way to her through the crowd, some people try to engage him. In his element, Lyle is an important man. As he reaches her, curiosity mounts around them. *Who is this girl?*

Lyle looks to Libby with a proud smile.

LYLE
Welcome to our club.

LIBBY
Seriously, I have no idea what the fuck is going on.

Lyle checks the time on his watch.

LYLE
Our session doesn't start til midnight. You want me to show you around?

LIBBY
I want my money.

Lyle pulls an envelope out of his back pocket and hands it to Libby, who checks its thickness.

LYLE
Go ahead, count it if you want.

She takes a quick peek inside, pockets the envelope. Lyle grabs her arm, prodding her onward.

LYLE (CONT'D)
The Kill Club, or KC as we call it, is basically for solvers. And fans of famous murders. Everyone from like, Fanny Parker to--

LIBBY
--Who's Fanny Parker?

LYLE
She was an eight year old, got chopped to bits in England back in 1867. That guy you just passed with the sweets, he was playing at being her murderer, Frederick Baker. We've been trying to push out the role players, but... too many guys are into that.

LIBBY
1867... She's no competition for me then.

She takes in the crowd, noticing people flocked in front of a booth: *Bob's Bizarre Bazaar*.

LIBBY (CONT'D)
What's that over there?

She approaches the booth. A man wearing an oversized black moustache sits behind a table, loudly slurping soup. Behind him, four skulls lined up on a plank with a sign: *The Final Four*. The man raises his eyes to Lyle and Libby.

BOB BERDELLA
(giving his best ogre
impression)
Lyle, who is your young friend?

LYLE
Bob Berdella, this is Libby Day, whose family was... of the Kinnakee Kansas Farmhouse Massacre. The Days.

Bob Berdella signals for them to come closer. Libby approaches, amused. He leans menacingly across the table.

BOB BERDELLA
If you had a cock, you'd be in pieces in my garbage right now... the parts I didn't use for chili.

Bob swats at her. Libby skitters back, then lurches forward, throwing a punch that doesn't quite connect. Lyle is quick to restrain Libby, picks her up and carries her away.

BOB BERDELLA (CONT'D)
(hands up)
Dude, I was only kidding!

People nearby laugh, leaving Bob humiliated. Lyle finds it entertaining.

LIBBY
Let go of me!

LYLE
Okay, that wouldn't have been the first fistfight at Kill Club, but it might have been the weirdest!

Far enough away from the booth, Lyle releases her.

LIBBY
I don't like being threatened!

LYLE
It was just a game...

LIBBY
You're a bunch of freaks!

LYLE
No, not everyone's like that.
(a beat)
Look at *them*, for example...

He points to his immediate left, Booth 31. A dozen men argue over a map of the Midwest with red pinpoints on it.

LYLE (CONT'D)

These guys, they're basically creating their own mystery. They think they've identified a serial killer. Some guy who's been crossing states - Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma - to help kill people.

LIBBY

What do you mean by "help"?

LYLE

All the victims had massive amounts of debt: family men and older people bogged down with maxed out credit cards and big mortgages. No way out.

LIBBY

He kills people because they aren't good with money?

LYLE

No, they think he's like a Jack Kevorkian for people who have bad credit and good life insurance. They call him the Angel of Debt.

Appalled, Libby does an about-face and walks away. Lyle trails her.

LYLE (CONT'D)

You'll like our group. It's much more serious. We have an ex-cop, a lawyer...

He points to a tidy corner booth.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Look, they're already here.

She halts and sizes up the group: about fifteen people of all ages, flipping through stacks of folders or just loitering. A fat, frizzy-haired woman, MAGDA, is the first to look up, narrowing her eyes at Libby, then widening them in recognition. On the table in front of her, a junior-high photo of Libby, devil horns drawn on her head. The members of the group slowly gather around Libby as Lyle places his hand on her shoulder.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Hi, everyone. It is my honor to present our special guest, and the star of this year's Kill Club - Libby Day!

INT. TALLMAN CORPORATION BUILDING , BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Libby sits at a table facing the members of the group which has doubled in size. She struggles to answer their questions.

LIBBY (V.O.)
First there were the usual questions... Yes, I lived in Kansas City. No, I didn't have any contact with Ben. Yes, he wrote me a few times a year but I tossed the envelopes straight into the trash.

MAGDA
 And going forward, you'd be willing to sell them?

Libby considers this.

LIBBY
 If the price is right.

Lyle claps his hands.

LYLE
 Well! You have here in front of you a key figure in the Day case, a so-called eyewitness, so why don't we move on to the real questions?

A cop-looking man raises his hand. Libby braces herself, signals him to proceed.

COP-LOOKING MAN
 Why did you testify that Ben killed your family?

A beat. Libby appears unfazed.

LIBBY
 Because he did. I was there.

MAGDA
 You were hiding, Sweetheart! No way you saw what you said you did, otherwise you'd be dead too.

Rattled, Libby just sighs and looks to Lyle. No backup. She is on her own. ROBERT, a grey-haired, moustachioed man, intervenes to diffuse the tension.

ROBERT
 My friends.... We haven't even presented the facts of the case. We have to respect protocol.

LIBBY
 I know the facts.

LYLE
 (gently)
 Please, Libby. Just answer the questions.

She scowls.

LYLE (CONT'D)
 Robert, go on.

Robert takes a page from a folder on his lap.

ROBERT

Fact: somewhere around two a.m. on January third, nineteen eighty-five, a person or persons killed three members of the Day family in their farmhouse in Kinnakee, Kansas. Michelle was strangled. Debby died of a shotgun wound. Patty of two shotgun wounds and deep cuts from a Bowie hunting knife.

Lyle studies Libby, whose face shows no emotion.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Fact: youngest child Libby escaped the killer or killers through a window in her mother's room.

(a beat)

Fact: oldest child Benjamin claims he was out sleeping in a neighbor's barn after an argument with his mother. He has never produced another alibi, and was extremely uncooperative with the police.

Robert pauses for dramatic effect, eyeing the group. Libby is in a daze.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Libby testified that she saw Ben commit the murders. Despite Libby's confused testimony and young age, and despite a startling lack of physical evidence, Ben Day was convicted, based largely on rumors that he was involved in devil worship.

Part of a crime-scene photo has slid out of Robert's folder, displaying a plump, bloody leg. Libby catches him tucking the image back in.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

What I think we can agree on is that the killings can be traced to the events of January 2, 1985. It All went wrong in a single day - no pun intended. Something went really wrong *that day*.

Murmurs of laughter and guilty looks toward Libby.

LIBBY

Are you done?

Robert nods.

MAGDA

I think the general consensus is that Runner Day did it. He goes to Patty, tries to bully her for money, as usual gets nothing, goes haywire... I mean, the guy was crazy, right?

She looks to Libby for agreement.

LIBBY
I don't remember my father that well.
He left when I was, like, two.

MAGDA
Where's he now?

LIBBY
I don't know.

A man at the back raises his hand.

MAN AT THE BACK
There was a bloodstain on Michelle's
bedsheets, different blood type than
anyone in the family. But since the
sheets were from Goodwill, the
prosecution claimed the blood could
have come from anywhere.

LIBBY
We were very poor... A lot of things
in our house came from Goodwill.

The youngest kid in the group takes the floor.

YOUNG KID
Do you know how to find Runner? Could
you ask him some questions for us?

LIBBY
What about Ben? Are you saying he had
nothing to do with it?

MAGDA
Please, this is the grossest
miscarriage of justice ever!

Libby shoots daggers at Magda. Lyle interjects.

LYLE
Magda here is very involved in the
effort to free your brother.

MAGDA
He's a wonderful man... He draws, he
writes poetry. You should get to know
him, Libby, you really should.

On the table in front of Magda, Libby notices a series of
private photos of the Day family.

LIBBY
Where'd you get those?

Magda covers the photos with her thick hand.

MAGDA
I... found them.

LYLE

Libby, no one doubts you were in the house... But did you really see what you claimed you did? Or could you have been coached?

LIBBY

Ben never even filed an appeal, for Chrissakes! He's never tried to get out.

MAGDA

He had reason enough for eight appeals. But he's lost hope.

A beat.

LIBBY

Good.

She gets up.

LIBBY (CONT'D)

You all enjoy your conspiracy theories. I'm out of here.

COP-LOOKING MAN

Oh don't be like that... Stay. Convince us.

Libby leaves the booth. Behind her, she hears Magda's comments.

MAGDA

See? Still a little liar.

Without stopping, Libby flips them the bird as she disappears into the crowd.

INT. DAYS FARM , GIRLS BEDROOM - NIGHT / B&W

The following images are in black & white and shot from LIBBY'S POV.

LIBBY (V.O.)

That night, that night, that night...

In the background of the girls' bedroom, frost encases the inside of the window. In the foreground, Debby's face. She is asleep.

LIBBY (V.O.)

I'd woken up in the room I shared with my sisters. Debby had gotten in bed with me. We usually jammed in together for warmth.

The camera moves through the room toward the door. Michelle is sleeping on the floor, a pen in her mouth, her diary in her arms. We see Libby's tiny hand turning the doorknob to leave.

INT. DAYS FARM , PATTY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT / B&W

LIBBY (V.O.)
*In the winter, my mom slept in two
 pairs of sweatpants and usually didn't
 move when I got in bed with her.*

We enter Patty's bedroom and climb on the bed to join her under the covers. Patty turns to us and stares for a moment, a sad look on her face.

LIBBY (V.O.)
*But that night, it was different. She
 had on a white nightgown and was
 wearing her cross. She never slept
 with jewelry on.*

She kisses us on the forehead and gives us a hug.

PATTY
 I love you, Libby... I love you,
 Ladybug. Never forget that.

INT. DAYS FARM , PATTY'S BEDROOM - LATER / B&W

A violent scream, followed by the FIRE OF A SHOTGUN.

LIBBY (V.O.)
I was awakened by my mother's scream.

PATTY (O.S.)
 NOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

Still from Libby's POV, we turn to discover that Patty has left the bed. Her scream is heard from the other side of the door.

BEN (O.S.)
 Why'd you make me do this, bitch?!

ANOTHER SHOTGUN FIRE. Patty makes some sort of cawing sound, but is no longer able to form words. A THIRD SHOT silences her for good. Libby throws off the covers, hightails it under the bed. Her breathing becomes labored. She trembles.

YOUNG LIBBY (O.S.)
 (whispering)
 Go away... Go away.

Ben wails, frantically muttering to himself. He yells out.

BEN (O.S.)
 Libby, Libby?!

Libby darts out from under the bed, beelines it to the window. Throwing it open, she squeezes herself through the broken window screen...

EXT. OUTSIDE THE DAYS FARM - NIGHT / B&W

... and drops onto the snowy ground a few feet below. She picks herself up and bolts toward the woods, panting.

BEN (O.S.)
Libby!!!

We turn back to the house to find it entirely dark save for one window, light shining through. We resume our sprint. Upon reaching the pond, we stop to crouch in the reeds. Uneven breathing and cold shivers combined.

A flashlight scans the tops of the surrounding reeds. A silhouette approaches, brushing past the camera. We hear Libby's muffled sobs.

BEN (O.S.)(CONT'D)
Libby! Stay where you are, Sweetheart!
Stay where you are!

Ben's silhouette and the beam of light come closer... and closer, his heavy boots crunching the snow.

Silence.

The flashlight takes a final sweep around and Ben marches back to the house.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE DAYS FARM - MORNING / B&W

At dawn, the house is silently silhouetted against the sky. From Libby's POV, we see her frozen hands swinging in and out of the frame, as she trudges toward it.

INT. DAYS FARM - MORNING / B&W

Inside, the aftermath of the night's events. Blood on the walls. A rifle left upright on the arm of the sofa. We take a furtive glance at Debby, laying in a corner of the living room.

In the hallway, Patty's body. Libby bawls, finding it hard to speak coherently.

YOUNG LIBBY (O.S.)
Mi... Mi... Michelle?

Libby walks quietly into the girls' bedroom and discovers Michelle's corpse curled up on the bed, surrounded by dolls. The walls are smeared in blood: pentagrams and satanic signs. Food is scattered all over the floor.

LIBBY (V.O.)
*Everything was broken, ripped,
destroyed. The mayhem was so haphazard
that a single Rice Krispie would be
found in my mother's chest wound.*

Libby returns to the living room, hobbles over to the phone, picks up the receiver.

LIBBY (V.O.)
*I dialed my Aunt Diane's number, the
only one I knew by heart.*

After a few rings, a sleepy voice answers.

DIANE (O.S.)
Hello?

YOUNG LIBBY
THEY'RE ALL DEAD!!!

BLACK.

LIBBY (V.O.)
*At the hospital, they sedated me and
removed three frostbitten toes.*

INT. LIBBY'S HOUSE , BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE UP on Libby's eyes, abruptly opening. Fully clothed, she had fallen asleep on her bed, the muted sound of television barely discernible in the background. She takes some time to collect herself.

LIBBY (V.O.)
Since then I've been waiting to die.

FADE TO BLACK.

*Once I was in art class and met a boy named Ben.
It was his heart I knew I would win.
He has red hair and really nice skin.
Are you "in"?*

Krissi Cates

INT. KINNAKEE MIDDLE SCHOOL , HALLWAY - DAY

The inside of a little girl's bin: colorful notebooks covered with cartoon characters, crayons, hairpins. A male hand takes a crayon and writes on pink construction paper.

It's Christmas break and I'm thinking of you. Guess who?

B.

The hand folds the paper, puts it in the bin before closing it. It's Ben's. He picks up a mop and resumes cleaning the school's hallway. He hammers away at a big, blue stain.

INT. DAYS FARM , BATHROOM , DAY

The basin of a sink is stained purple. Patty looks at an empty box of hair color: on its cover, a photograph of a woman with jet-black hair worn in a pageboy. Patty pitches the box into the trash, grabs a can of Comet, and begins tackling the mess.

Title card: PATTY DAY, JANUARY 2nd 1985, 9:50 AM

The bathroom door creaks open. Michelle stands in the door frame, diary pressed against her chest.

MICHELLE
Mom, is Ben in trouble?

PATTY
(still scrubbing)
No, sweetheart. Ben's fine.

MICHELLE
Are you sure?

Patty stops, irritated.

PATTY
Michelle, what do you want?

MICHELLE
I heard rumors...

Michelle smiles smugly but before she can continue, Libby yells from another room.

YOUNG LIBBY (O.S.)
Mom, there's a car coming!

INT. DAYS FARM , KITCHEN , DAY

Libby climbs on a chair to look out the window. Debby hurries to her side.

DEBBY
Who is it?

Patty and Michelle join them. Through the window, we see a typical Midwestern farmer in his fifties, climbing out of his pickup truck. Patty watches anxiously as JOSEPH strides to the house.

PATTY
Girls, go play in your bedroom.

INT. DAYS FARM , LIVING ROOM - DAY

Patty serves coffee to Joseph, who reclines on a couch, smiling as if he owned the place.

JOSEPH
Well, it sure smells good in here.

PATTY
Pancakes. Want some?

JOSEPH
No thank you.

She sits in a chair facing him. He glances at the hallway.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(playful)
Who's the little spy?

Patty turns around to discover Libby, who quickly runs away.

PATTY
(smiling)
That's Libby.

JOSEPH
She's got red hair like her mom... You
all Irish?

PATTY
German. My maiden name was Krause.

Patty takes a sip of coffee, nervous.

JOSEPH
There was another German farmer near
Ark City. Last summer, his hopper got
screwy and dumped four thousand pounds
of wheat on him. The poor fellow
drowned in it. Suffocated before they
could get him out. Talk about a freak
accident.

PATTY
I know this story.

JOSEPH
The man's farm was going under... He
owed us, I mean the FHA, a lot of
money... Did you know that too?

A tense moment.

PATTY
Is there something wrong, Joseph?

Joseph sighs, takes another sip of coffee, and assumes a
diplomatic tone.

JOSEPH
They're going to foreclose.

Patty gives away nothing.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
We've run out of options. I've held
them off for six months longer than I
thought I could.

PATTY
There must be a way.

JOSEPH
The only way to fix this is money.
Now. I'm talking beg, borrow, or
steal.

Patty clenches her jaw. We hear the girls playing in their
bedroom.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(solemn)
So Patty, how badly do you want to
keep this farm?

EXT. KANSAS CITY LIBERTY MEMORIAL - DAY

On the grand esplanade of Liberty Memorial stands a single figure. It is Libby, dressed entirely in black. She looks off toward the buildings of Downtown Kansas City.

LIBBY (V.O.)
Okay, technically, I saw nothing. I only heard because I was hiding while my family died. Because I was a worthless little coward... But I reminded myself that Ben had to be guilty - HAD. TO. BE. - mainly because I couldn't handle any other possibility.

Lyle walks toward Libby. She looks him up and down as he meets her. Something weighs on his conscience.

LYLE
 Libby, I'm sorry... I didn't realize that, you know... this is real to you.

A beat.

LIBBY
 I been thinking a lot about the case. If I were to look into it more, is that something the club would be able to finance?

LYLE
 You changed your mind?

LIBBY
 No. As far as I'm concerned, Ben Day is a killer. But I do need money.

Lyle considers this.

LYLE
 Wow... It doesn't sound very... Noble.

LIBBY
 Fine.

She goes to leave.

LYLE
 Hold on...
 (catching up)
 I mean, sure, many more doors would open for you than for anyone else. What kind of compensation were you thinking?

LIBBY
 It would have to be case-by-case. Depending on how hard it is to find the person and what questions you'd want me to ask.

LYLE
Do you really have no contact with
Runner?

She shakes her head.

LYLE (CONT'D)
It might be a good idea to track him
down. Although, personally, I don't
think Runner did it...

LIBBY
So what's your theory?

LYLE
I'm not quite ready to share that yet.

LIBBY
And if Ben's innocent, why doesn't he
try to get out?

LYLE
Maybe you could go ask him.

LIBBY
(defensive)
No. No, not Ben. Not yet.

LYLE
Is it a money thing?

LIBBY
It's a "lots-of-things" thing.

He takes a small wallet out of his pocket and pulls out a few
bills and extends them to Libby.

LYLE
Three hundred dollars.

She hesitates.

LIBBY
Where do you get all this money?

LYLE
As treasurer, I have a certain amount
of discretionary funds. This is the
project I choose to use them for. If
it leads to a reopening of the case,
that would definitely put the Kill
Club on the map.

She smiles and takes the money.

LYLE (CONT'D)
What's so funny?

LIBBY
You're a *noble* embezzler. That almost
makes you likeable.

EXT. ROAD TO THE WAREHOUSE - DAY

In the middle of a big brush-hogged clearing stands a tin warehouse.

Ben pedals up the dirt road, stopping fifty yards from the structure. He hides his bike behind a tree to walk the rest of the way. Noticing blood trickling again from his forehead, he calmly swipes it with a fingertip.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Ben enters the disused building. Inside, stacks of carpet samples and three old, ugly couches rest on the dirt floor.

A man, in his mid-twenties, plays electric guitar and he kicks ass. A kinky-haired young stoner couple slouches on the couch, listening to him. Another guy sleeps in a corner in fetal position. The GIRL of the couple lifts a tuft of yellow hair and eyes Ben. Her BOYFRIEND sits up.

WAREHOUSE BOY
You know someone here?

Ben gestures toward the GUITARIST.

WAREHOUSE BOY (CONT'D)
(to the guitarist)
Hey, you know this kid?

The guitarist stops playing, checks out Ben.

GUITARIST
Nah, man. I don't hang out with middle schoolers.

BEN
Suck my dick.

WAREHOUSE BOY
Woah! Little guy's pissed!

The guitarist takes a beer from a cooler, looks at Ben's bloody forehead.

GUITARIST
Dude, you been in a fight?

Ben shrugs in agreement.

GUITARIST (CONT'D)
With who?

BEN
Trey Teepano.

WAREHOUSE BOY
You liar. That crazy Indian would kick your ass!

The girl picks a roach from an ashtray, fires it up.

WAREHOUSE GIRL

I hear Trey is into some scary-ass
shit, like satanic stuff.

As blood pools on Ben's forehead, he silences everyone by
smearing it all over his face.

BEN

It's true, we get into some pretty
dark shit.

WAREHOUSE GIRL

Were you with the guys who killed
those cows?

BEN

We had to. It was an order.

GUITARIST

Weird order, man. That was my
hamburger.

The three of them laugh while Ben remains dead serious,
relishing this newfound attention.

BEN

Sometimes things have to die. We have
to kill them. Just like Jesus requires
sacrifice, well, so does Satan.

The sound of a door slamming echoes through the empty warehouse,
getting everyone's attention. A tall, muscular man with long,
slick black hair and a chiseled face comes into view.

Title card: TREY TEEPANO, JANUARY 2nd 1985, 11:40 AM

Ben becomes rattled by the sight of TREY.

TREY

(to Ben)

What the fuck you doing here? Diondra
here?

BEN

She's in Salina. Just thought I'd stop
by, kill some time.

Ben lowers his eyes. He looks like a little boy now. Trey grabs
a beer from the cooler. He makes a strong impression on the
group.

WAREHOUSE GIRL

We heard about your fight. And other
bad stuff... Some shit about the Devil
and what you guys do... you know.

Trey grins, looks at Ben who avoids eye contact.

TREY

Let's go, she might be back.

EXT. ROAD TO THE WAREHOUSE - DAY

Trey climbs into his truck and opens the passenger door. Ben considers his bike further down the road. He hesitates, then decides to climb in.

INT. TREY'S TRUCK - DAY

Trey turns the ignition on. Ben is worried stiff.

TREY

What you were saying in there... Hope you're ready to back that shit up.

Ben timidly agrees.

TREY (CONT'D)

Then maybe tonight you become a man. Maybe.

Trey flicks on his cassette player, which spits out sinister Death Metal. He cranks up the volume and drives the truck through brush toward the actual road.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE KANSAS STATE PENITENTIARY - DAY

The Death Metal music continues during this sequence. Libby's car rolls in front of camera and up to the Kansas State Penitentiary.

INT. LIBBY'S CAR - DAY

Libby looks extremely nervous behind the wheel. She parks but doesn't get out. Taking a small bottle of cheap vodka from the glove compartment, she throws it back, then looks at the American flag floating atop the prison.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE COURTHOUSE - DAY / B&W

Back to Black & White, the music suddenly stops as we see another American flag: at half-mast above the Kansas courthouse.

PROSECUTOR (O.S.)

Please, Libby. Tell us what happened that night.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY / B&W

Inside the courtroom, an impressionable Young Libby sits in the witness box.

YOUNG LIBBY

I think Ben brought a witch to the house and she killed us.

Rumbles of shock travel through the courtroom.

INT. PENITENTIARY , METAL DETECTOR - DAY

PROSECUTOR (O.S.)
Hmmm... Now Libby, let's talk about
what really happened. If you don't
mind.

Back to present day, adult Libby walks through a metal detector.

YOUNG LIBBY (O.S.)
I saw Ben as I was standing at the
door of my Mom's room, he was
threatening her with our shotgun.

Having inspected Libby's bag, a young guard returns it and
directs her to a door down the hallway.

BEN (O.S.)
Satan encourages you to do what feels
good, because we are all basically
animals.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY / B&W

Ben is at the stand, playing with his black hair pulled into a
ponytail.

PROSECUTOR (O.S.)
Benjamin, you do understand this is
very serious, don't you?

Ben's only answer is an arrogant smile.

INT. PENITENTIARY , VISITATION ROOM , DAY

Libby nervously opens the metal door to the visitation room:
five booths, only one occupied. Libby sits two booths away. A
guard opens a door on the other side of the glass divider. Libby
holds her breath.

Ben, now 41, enters the room, sees Libby and walks toward her,
beaming. He wears his red hair long, tucked behind his ears, and
sports a goatee. He sits down, places a hand on the glass, nods
at Libby to do the same.

LIBBY (V.O.)
*There he was, after all these years,
sitting in front of me... My handsome
big brother... And I felt, despite my
better judgement, the same chesty
pride I'd had as a kid.*

They look at each other, Ben still smiling.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*So I warned myself... He knows how to
play you.*

Not smiling back, she doesn't press her hand against the glass,
but instead picks up the phone. Not offended, Ben does the same.

LIBBY (CONT'D)

Hey, Ben.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

Hey, Libby.

(a beat)

I can't believe this. I never thought I'd see you here.

LIBBY

And I never thought I'd come. But you have fans outside. People who take you for a victim. Well played.

Not responding to her provocation, he calmly studies her.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

I've thought about you a lot over the years. Once in a while, I hear about you from others, but it's not the same.

LIBBY

How is it in here?

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

I'm fine. I really am. I got my high school diploma, I'm even partway to a college degree. English. I read fucking Shakespeare.

(affected tone)

Forsooth, you little booger!

Libby remains distant.

LIBBY

Good for you.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

Man, Libby, you look just like Mom. Do people tell you that all the time?

LIBBY

Who would tell me that? Runner's gone, don't know where. It had already been years since Aunt Diane and I had talked when she died. There's no one.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

That's not good. They should've taken better care of you.

LIBBY

What are you, born-again? You're not supposed to be nice to me.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

I'm not that nice. I got a lot of anger for a lot of people. You're just not one of them.

LIBBY

What about my testimony?

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
You don't read my letters, huh?

She shrugs. Ben gathers his thoughts.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD (CONT'D)
It only surprised me that people
believed you... You were always a
little liar!

He laughs heartily. She shuts down.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD (CONT'D)
Seriously though... They wanted me in
here. And you were just a seven-year
old, caught in an insane situation.
You were so small...

Libby fiddles with the bottom of the screen. Ben watches her for
some time.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD (CONT'D)
Go on. Ask. Ask the question.

She looks him dead in the eyes.

LIBBY
Did you kill them?

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
No.

LIBBY
Then why didn't you file for an
appeal? Don't you want to get out of
here?

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
Sure I do. I just don't have a good
alibi, Libby. I don't. It happens.

LIBBY
What about all the devil worship
stuff?

He sighs.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
I was a frustrated teenage boy in a
house full of girls. At school, I was
the kid nobody paid attention to. Then
all of a sudden, in that courtroom,
people were scared of me. I was this
badass.

LIBBY
A badass charged with murdering his
family.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
Libby, I acted like a fool. But I
didn't kill Mom or Debby. Or Michelle.

She watches him wipe his eyes, keeping her guard up.

LIBBY

What about all that stuff they can do
now with DNA?

He grins.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

You sound like Runner. *DNA!* Like I
have a locker full of it and just
don't want to share.

LIBBY

You know where he is now?

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

Last letter was care of Bert Nolan's
Group Home for Men, somewhere in
Oklahoma. He asked me to send him five
hundred bucks so he could "continue
his research on my behalf".

She smiles in spite of herself.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD (CONT'D)

Good ol' Runner...

Ben scratches his arm, raising his sleeve just enough for Libby
to see a tattoo ending in -olly.

LIBBY

What's that?

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

(looking at the tattoo)

This? Old flame. We started as pen
pals. I thought I loved her, thought
I'd marry her, but turned out she
didn't really want to be stuck with a
guy in prison for life.

LIBBY

Must've hurt.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

It didn't tickle.

LIBBY

I meant the breakup.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

Ah... Yeah, it kinda sucked.

INT. DAYS FARM , PATTY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Patty sits hunched in her bed. We hear a car HORN outside,
followed by the footsteps of the girls racing to the window.

DEBBY

It's Aunt Diane!

INT. DAYS FARM , ENTRANCE , DAY

DIANE, a stout woman in her early forties, enters the house, a grocery bag in each arm. The girls greet her warmly.

DIANE
There are more bags in the car, with
some surprises! Go get them.

The girls run outside to the car. Diane unloads the bags on the kitchen table as Patty arrives.

PATTY
Oh, you shouldn't have, D.

They hug each other.

DIANE
It's what I do... Got them one of
those sticker books, too. You okay?

PATTY
(defeated)
The wolves are at the door.

Offering a compassionate smile, Diane touches her sister's cheek.

DIANE
They've been at the door for a long
time now... All by yourself, you never
stood a chance. Should have done like
me and left this place. Come on now, I
want my coffee!

Patty grabs the coffee pot and gets a mug out.

PATTY
You're right. It may be time for a
fresh start.

Diane looks outside to the girls bringing in the rest of the groceries from the car.

PATTY (CONT'D)
I thought I could do like you and move
close to the city. I'd like the kids
to experience something different,
have some opportunities...

She hands the mug to Diane, who's got something on her mind.

DIANE
How is it going with Ben?

PATTY
He's difficult.

DIANE
Is he here?

PATTY
No, why?

Libby, Michelle and Debby enter the house, quarreling. Diane lowers her voice.

DIANE
Do you know where he is?

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE , LIVING ROOM - DAY

SLOW MOTION: Back turned to the camera, a nubile seventeen-year old with long, dark, curly hair dances in front of a working fireplace to Van Halen's *Runnin' With The Devil*. A massive white pit bull runs up and bounces in excitement around her. Cigarette in hand, she wears nothing but a giant sweater and pink socks.

Title card: DIONDRA WERTZNER, JANUARY 2nd 1985, 12:10 PM

DIONDRA turns to Trey and Ben as they enter the luxurious living room. Two more pit bulls come prancing around them, barking. Trey gets a kick out of Ben's scared expression. Still dancing, Diondra smiles to Ben and waves him to remove his hat. As she discovers his jet-black hair, she gives him the thumbs up.

DIONDRA
Awesome. Told ya.

Ben looks relieved. Scattered across the floor lie a dozen shopping bags. Trey starts rummaging through them. Diondra comes closer to Ben, lifts her sweater to reveal pink panties. He smiles as she gives him a rough kiss.

DIONDRA (CONT'D)
Are you sure I'm not too old for you?

BEN
What's that mean?

DIONDRA
(wryly)
Mean's seventeen may just be too old
for your taste.

As Ben tries to understand her meaning, Trey pulls out a pair of leather pants from one of the bags.

TREY
Whoa, leather pants!

She tosses the pants to Ben.

DIONDRA
He's gonna look great in these.

TREY
Who d'ya think you're dating, David
Lee Roth?!

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE , BATHROOM - DAY

Ben, facing the bathroom mirror, struggles to zip up the tight leather pants. His boxers leave bulges in all the wrong places. Sounds of Diondra and Trey giggling. A knock at the door.

DIONDRA (O.S.)
Come model for us, stud!

Ben groans at their enjoyment and his frustration. He drops the pants to start all over again.

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE , LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ben steps out of the bathroom, his new pants now clinging perfectly. Diondra shrieks as she sees Ben and jumps in his arms.

DIONDRA
I knew it! You are a real stud! We
just have to mold you a little bit.

Trey slinks toward the bathroom as Ben confidently reclines into one of the chairs, finally belonging. Laughter tumbles from the bathroom.

TREY (O.S.)
Dio, come here!

Diondra darts toward the bathroom and then laughs uncontrollably.

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE , BATHROOM - DAY

Ben, anxious, enters to find Trey holding his boxers in one hand.

TREY
Dude, you're wearing those ballhuggers
naked?! Do you know how many dudes
have jammed their pack into those
pants before you got 'em? Right now you
got eight different guys' ballsweat on
you!

Diondra convulses with laughter. Trey holds out the boxers by two fingers.

TREY (CONT'D)
These got shit stains in 'em, too! You
better take care of this, little
woman.

He tosses the boxers onto Diondra's head. She screams, runs back to the living room...

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE , LIVING ROOM - DAY

... and throws the boxers to the dogs, who rip them apart. Ben is seething.

DIONDRA
(to Ben)
Oh, sweetie, don't be mad. You look
great, really.

She slides up close to him.

DIONDRA (CONT'D)
Come, let's kiss and make up.

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE , DIONDRA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Diondra closes her bedroom's door behind them and throws herself onto Ben. He tries to free himself from her grip and in return, she scratches his face.

BEN
What the hell?!

She pulls him toward her and they fall on the bed, stuffed animals bouncing off both sides. She presses her mouth against his, and helps him take his pants off. Overcome with sexual desire, Ben pulls off her sweater and rips away her panties, then thrusts himself inside.

DIONDRA
(provocative)
Is that all you got for me? You can do better than that.

He pounds harder, his face contorting. She screams, gouging her painted nails into his back. He climaxes loudly, collapsing over her small body, then rolls onto his back next to her. They gasp for air.

DIONDRA (CONT'D)
I saw some friends at the mall today.
You know a little girl named Krissi
Cates?

Ben collects himself.

BEN
Uh, yeah, I guess. She's in that art
class I been helping out after school.
Why?

DIONDRA
You never told me about no art class.

BEN
Just helping kids. One of my old
teachers asked me to.

DIONDRA
They say the police want to talk to
you. That you did some wrong stuff
with some little girls.

Ben is at a loss.

BEN
What the fuck...

DIONDRA
Everyone's calling you a perv'.

She draws her knees to her chin.

BEN
 (raising his voice)
 Diondra, I didn't do anything wrong
 with any little girl!

She signals him to hush.

DIONDRA
 Shhh.

BEN
 What?!

She takes his hand and puts it on her belly.

DIONDRA
 (whispering)
 The baby's kicking.

INT. PUB - NIGHT

666 blazes onto a laptop screen. It is the opening of an eighties documentary: "Threat to Innocence: Satanism in America". Heavy metal roars over rapidly flashing images of demonic signs and dead people. The sensationalist footage gets paused at the image of a burning pentagram.

LYLE (O.S.)
 Everyone at the time, police, judges,
 the psychiatric community... they were
 seeing Satanists everywhere.

Libby and Lyle sit at the same table in the pub where they first met. They stare at Lyle's laptop.

LIBBY
 And there weren't?

LYLE
 Sure there were some. Still are. But
 real ones?

LIBBY
 What about the investigation?

LYLE
 The crime scene was contaminated.
 People traipsing in and out of the
 house all day. It was against all the
 rules of police procedure, but no one
 cared.

Libby takes a sip of her PBR, considering the mother of pearl pen resting on a notepad in front of him.

LYLE (CONT'D)
 They had the perfect culprit: a
 strange teenage boy that no one in
 town liked much and who listened to
 heavy metal... It was convenient.

He leans over and reaches into his backpack.

LYLE (CONT'D)

I made a copy of our files if you want to take a look.

He sits upright and drops a thick folder on the table next to the notepad. The pen is gone.

LIBBY

Would that change anything?

LYLE

Legally, in order to help Ben, we need to compile new evidence. And if you wanted, you would be able to recant your testimony when we file for Habeas Corpus. But time is of the essence...

LIBBY

Why?

LYLE

Because of budget cuts, they're consolidating departments and evidence from old cases will soon be destroyed. It's a question of weeks... That's why we reached out to you, Libby. It's now or never.

Libby lets this new information sink in.

LIBBY

You ever hear of Ben with a serious girlfriend? One with the name Molly, or Polly? He had a tattoo.

LYLE

Doesn't ring a bell.

The same, old, miniskirted waitress puts down a plate of fries in front of Lyle.

LIBBY

Tell me who you think did it.

Lyle meticulously dips one fry in the ketchup, tosses it in his mouth, and sits back in his chair.

LYLE

I think Lou Cates did it, Krissi Cates's father. We found out he had a history of violence, went to jail for aggravated battery.

Libby draws a blank.

LYLE (CONT'D)

You do know who Krissi Cates is, right?

She shakes her head, much to Lyle's amazement. Intrigued, Libby takes the folder and opens it.

INT. LIBBY'S HOUSE , LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

*LIBBY (V.O.)
Since I was seven, I'd been seeing Ben
in flashes, like in a haunted house...*

Libby sits on her couch, leafing through the minutes of the court hearing, pictures, press clippings...

*LIBBY (V.O.)
But I had forgotten about Ben the boy,
simply my brother, shy and serious...*

She studies a picture of him accompanying an article in the local newspaper.

*LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
... I realized that deep inside I was
secretly hoping he was innocent... and
that he'd be returned to me... the Ben
I knew... before I was afraid of him.*

She absorbs the information, taking notes with Lyle's pen.

*LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The molestation of Krissi Cates and
the murders weren't legally linked.
But everyone had heard the rumors and
the jury was surely poisoned against
him.*

She closes the file.

*LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Oddly, all the little girls backed
down and the Cates family never
pressed charges. They got a quick
settlement with the school district
and then they moved.*

She picks up the phone and presses redial.

*LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Lyle found Krissi Cates's mother in
Emporia, Kansas. He'd left several
messages but she'd never returned his
calls.*

We hear the ringing.

*LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Never leave a message for someone you
really want to reach. Keep phoning and
phoning until someone picks up, out of
anger or curiosity or fear...*

A woman's voice on the other end.

*KRISSI CATES'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Hello?*

*LIBBY
This is Libby Day, Ben Day's little
sister. Do you remember Ben Day?*

Libby hears the woman lighting a cigarette, deeply inhaling the smoke from her first drag.

KRISSI CATES'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Yes, I remember Ben Day.

LIBBY
I'd like to talk to you about the charges your daughter Krissi made against him.

KRISSI CATES'S MOTHER (O.S.)
What was your name? Lizzy?

LIBBY
Libby.

KRISSI CATES'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Listen, Libby... I've remarried and I have very little contact with my previous family.

LIBBY
Do you know how I can reach Lou or Krissi?

A loaded silence. The woman finally lets out a lengthy exhale.

KRISSI CATES'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Lou would be in some bar in Kansas, I'd guess. As for Krissi, drive west on I-70, just past Colombia. Take a left into the giant strip club, you'll find her.

Libby scribbles down as fast as she can.

KRISSI CATES'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Don't call again.

EXT. CATES HOUSE , ENTRANCE - DAY

Patty wears makeup and her Sunday best. Worried sick, she stands next to Diane in front of a well-cared for upper middle-class house, with half a dozen cars parked in front.

Title card: PATTY DAY, JANUARY 2nd 1985, 2:45 PM

An elegant, blond woman opens the front door.

KRISSI CATES'S MOTHER
May I help you?

PATTY
Mrs. Cates?

KRISSI CATES'S MOTHER
Yes.

Patty starts crying.

KRISSI CATES'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
 Oh... did he hurt your little girl
 too?

Patty collects herself, wiping the tears with the back of her hand.

PATTY
 No. I am Patty Day. Ben's mother.

LOU CATES, a strong, tall man in his late thirties, appears behind Mrs. Cates.

KRISSI CATES'S MOTHER
 It's her, it's Ben Day's mother!

Lou takes a moment, his gaze to Patty glacial.

LOU CATES
 You'd better come inside.

INT. CATES'S HOUSE , LIVING ROOM - DAY

Inside the living room, Patty and Diane are unnerved to discover what looks like a children's birthday party. Four girls are at play, foil stars on their faces and hands. Several others sit with their parents, eating cake. The girls look unconcerned while the parents put on a brave face, despite their obvious panic.

Sitting in the middle of the floor, a pretty blond girl, YOUNG KRISSI CATES, plays with a MAN IN HIS FIFTIES.

MAN IN HIS FIFTIES
 Krissi, please show me exactly how it happened.

Krissi, holding two dolls that have been stripped of their clothes, places the boy doll on top of the girl doll in a way that leaves no room for doubt.

YOUNG KRISSI CATES
 Like that!

She concludes by tossing the dolls aside, bored. She notices Patty and points at her.

YOUNG KRISSI CATES (CONT'D)
 Who is she?

Not waiting for an official introduction, Patty strides across the room and crouches in front of Krissi.

PATTY
 Krissi, my name is Patty Day, I'm Ben's mom.

Krissi's eyes widen. She suddenly scurries away yelling.

YOUNG KRISSI CATES
 I DON'T WANT HER HERE!

Patty watches helplessly as Krissi throws herself on the floor and begins ripping at her hair.

YOUNG KRISSI CATES (CONT'D)
I don't want her here! You promised!
You promised I wouldn't have to!

A brunette girl runs over and wraps herself around Krissi, wailing.

BRUNETTE GIRL
We're not safe!

The other girls join together in a chorus of crying, affecting every parent in the room. Not knowing how to proceed, Patty looks to Krissi Cates's mother whose face is a mask of loathing.

KRISSI CATES'S MOTHER
We've heard about you... You've got four kids at home. You can't afford one of them. Their daddy's a drunk, if not worse. You're on welfare... and Jesus Christ, you've let your son do this!

Lou Cates approaches menacingly.

LOU CATES
Where is Ben? I hope you're not hiding him. The police are looking for him.

PATTY
I've been trying to find him, I swear!
Please stop screaming!

Diane comes to the rescue and takes Patty's arm.

DIANE
Come on, we've seen enough.

Krissi, who is now cradled in her father's arms, looks straight at Patty.

YOUNG KRISSI CATES
Ben is going to hell.

INT. LIBBY'S CAR - EVENING

Bright neon signs silently shouting **LIVE GIRLS!** through a windshield.

LIBBY (O.S.)
I guess Live Girls is a better selling point than Dead Girls.

EXT. STRIP CLUB PARKING LOT - EVENING

Libby and Lyle get out of Libby's car, parked off the highway on a strip club's parking lot.

LYLE
What the hell happened to this girl?

On the other side of the road sits a gas station and a trucker park. Libby notices a woman's silhouette climbing down from a truck.

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Inside the large club, a few men sit around the main stage where a young brunette dances gracelessly. Libby, closely followed by Lyle, walks up to the bartender.

LIBBY
We're looking for Krissi.

The bartender points to someone behind Libby: a woman, with long bleached hair, athletic legs and a huge rack. Coming out of the rest room, discreetly pinching her nose, KRISSE CATES throws a large bag over her shoulder, about to leave. Libby gestures to Lyle not to move.

LIBBY (CONT'D)
Krissi?

KRISSE CATES
Yes.

LIBBY
Do you have time for a quick chat?

KRISSE CATES
About what?

LIBBY
To be frank, it's about Ben Day.

The mention of Ben has little effect on Krissi, who is visibly high.

KRISSE CATES
Buy me a drink?

LIBBY
Sure.

While they make it back to the bar, Lyle approaches like a restless puppy.

LYLE
Krissi Cates?

Krissi frowns at him, looks at Libby who nods knowingly.

LIBBY
This is... Lyle. He's with me. What can I get you?

KRISSE CATES
Vodka cranberry. Double.

LIBBY
(to the bartender)
Make it two.

Krissi snorts loudly.

KRISSI CATES
So Ben Day... Handsome red-headed
bastard. He really fucked my life up.

The bartender puts down their glasses.

LYLE
So, you maintain you were molested by
him?

Libby smiles and turns to Lyle.

LIBBY
Lyle, would you care for a private
dance?

LYLE
No.

LIBBY
Then shut the fuck up.

He scowls. Oblivious, Krissi raises her glass for a toast, her mood improving rapidly. She drinks half her cocktail.

KRISSI CATES
I was eleven, Ben was sixteen. He
started hanging around me after
school. I got that a lot. I was a cute
kid, we had a lot of money.

A flicker of pain in her eyes.

KRISSI CATES (CONT'D)
Wait, why are you here again?

LIBBY
We're researching the case.

KRISSI CATES
For a second I thought my mom sent
you. I know she knows I'm here.

Krissi finishes her drink and signals the bartender for another round, then points at some snacks displayed behind the bar.

KRISSI CATES (CONT'D)
Baby, gimme a pack of those sour-cream-
and-onions chips, please.
(to Libby)
You don't mind?

As Libby shakes her head, the bartender hands the chips to Krissi, who tears into the bag.

KRISSI CATES (CONT'D)
 Ben was really sneaky with me. He'd take me into the closet where he kept his janitor stuff and make me perform oral sex on him, then he'd make me swear allegiance to Satan.

The bartender brings Krissi her refill. Lyle sees an opening.

LYLE
 How could he force you to go into the closet, if it was at school?

Krissi looks away, annoyed.

KRISSI CATES
 Just, you know, threaten me. He had an altar in there, an upside-down cross. Some dead animals too, like sacrifice things. That's why I think he was working up to killing me. But he got his family instead... The whole family was into devil worshipping.

She punctuates her sentence by licking chip shards off her fake fingernails. Libby glares at her.

LYLE
 How did your dad react when you told him what Ben had done to you?

KRISSI CATES
 Oh my God he was so protective of me, he went totally ballistic!

Lyle checks in with Libby who doesn't return the look.

KRISSI CATES (CONT'D)
 I always think if he'd only found Ben, he'd have killed him, and then Ben's family would still be alive.

LIBBY
 (sarcastic)
 Ben's family, the horrible Devil worshippers?

Krissi nods and takes refuge in her drink.

LYLE
 Your dad lives around here?

Krissi is beginning to get antsy, fidgeting on her stool.

KRISSI CATES
 We've lost touch.

LYLE
 Do you mind if I ask... how did you end up here?

KRISSI CATES
 My family had some business setbacks.

Krissi stands up to signal the end of the conversation. She puts a hand on Libby's knee.

KRISSI CATES (CONT'D)
Can I borrow twenty dollars from you?
I haven't--

LYLE
--Can we get your dad's address?

KRISSI CATES
(snappy)
I told you, we're not in touch.

Libby elbows Lyle.

LIBBY
Take care of the check please.

Lyle complies reluctantly.

LYLE
(under his breath)
She's hiding something.

LIBBY
Thank you, Doctor Watson.

Libby comes closer to Krissi, who is searching for something in her big bag.

LIBBY (CONT'D)
How much?

KRISSI CATES
Make it fifty, it's easier. I will
totally pay you back. Write down your
name and address.

She hands Libby pen and paper. Libby pulls a fifty-dollar bill out of her pocket, lays it on the table next to the paper on which she writes.

LIBBY (V.O.)
*LIBBY. DAY. My name is Libby Day, you
lying whore.*

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE , DIONDRA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Diondra is in the bathroom standing in her underwear, checking her little bump of a belly. Ben lies on her bed, perturbed.

Title card: BEN DAY, JANUARY 2nd 1985, 4:30 PM

Diondra now speaks with a strong Southern accent.

DIONDRA
Are you sure Michelle hasn't found
out?

BEN
She hasn't mentioned it again.

DIONDRA
That little weasel, if I ever get my
hands on her...

BEN
Enough with that stupid accent!

Diondra raises her left hand, showing Ben a gold promise ring
with a big red stone.

DIONDRA
(dropping her accent)
I promised my dad, Ben. He said if he
ever found out I wasn't a virgin
anymore, he'd shoot me in the head. He
said exactly that!

They are interrupted by a knock on the door.

TREY (O.S.)
Hey you two... You've been in there
for hours. Finish it off, I'm bored!

They don't answer and Trey turns up the volume on the TV.
Diondra squirts styling mousse into her palm, about to apply it
onto her hair. She goes to sit at her vanity. Scattered amidst
the makeup products lie a number of mystical and religious
artifacts.

DIONDRA
I think we should leave town before my
parents get back.

BEN
Whatever...

DIONDRA
Really, that easy? How will you
support us? I won't have my allowance
anymore, you'll have to get a job. Or
ask Runner for money.

BEN
My dad?!

DIONDRA
Yeah, he's got some money, right?

BEN
Riiight... He does handyman stuff.
Labor. He works on farms.

She rolls her eyes at him.

BEN (CONT'D)
Well yeah... what did you expect?

She stands up and opens the door.

DIONDRA
Trey! Ben doesn't know about his dad!

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE , LIVING ROOM - DAY

Trey, shirtless, is slouched on the couch in front of MTV, smoking a joint. Ben joins them in the room.

TREY

You sorry sack of shit.

He hands the joint to Ben who takes a puff.

TREY (CONT'D)

You're smoking your dad's weed, buddy.

Ben coughs and looks at the joint in shock.

TREY (CONT'D)

It's crap, he overcharges, but no one else has any right now. He said he got it in Texas.

BEN

Fuck...

Diondra comes to hug him, and slips back into her Southern accent.

DIONDRA

Let's go find Runner, Honey... So we'll get some pot and some money. And then we can get the hell out of here.

INT. LIBBY'S HOUSE , LIVING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE UP on a phone's digits. Libby dialing. After one ring, a man with a rasping voice picks up.

BERT NOLAN (O.S.)

Bert Nolan Home.

LIBBY

Hi, Sir, I'm looking for Runner, or Ronald Day, is he staying with you?

BERT NOLAN (O.S.)

Well, he's been in and out, but I'd be happy to give him a message.

LIBBY

Could you ask him to call back Libby Day?

BERT NOLAN (O.S.)

Oh, the men here prefer to write. Less than fifty cents for a stamp and you don't have to worry about waiting in line for the phone.

She contemplates her options.

LIBBY

Would you tell him I need to talk about Ben and that night? I can come down to see him.

Libby hears Bert Nolan writing it down.

BERT NOLAN (O.S.)
"... Ben and that night", OK.

LIBBY
 Thanks.

INT. LIBBY'S HOUSE , STAIRWELL - DAY

Libby walks up the stairs to face three doors. She wavers before opening one.

LIBBY (V.O.)
I promised I'd be at Magda's house the next day for a "Free Day Society" reunion... And I had to find some of my family's "memorabilia" they could buy.

INT. LIBBY'S HOUSE , DARK PLACE ROOM - DAY

The room is dark, shutters closed.

LIBBY (V.O.)
Everything left from my past is crammed in here.

As Libby flips a switch, the ceiling light reveals a cluster of dusty cardboard boxes.

LIBBY (V.O.)
My mom's hands digging into the cherry-colored pellets that would blossom into milo... Ben mucking through the cold spring mud... Michelle and Debby jumping on bales of hay in the barn...

Stacked up in one corner, a dozen books with her smiling picture on the cover: **A Brand New Day**.

LIBBY (V.O.)
I can never dwell in these thoughts. I've labeled the memories as if they were a particularly dangerous region: Darkplace.

She enters the room and opens a box at random. It is filled with clothes. She pulls out a PINK FLOYD T-shirt.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
My mom's favorite T-shirt.

From another box, Libby pulls out a bunch of notebooks. She flips through random pages of childish scribbling, laughs.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Debby's notebooks.

Another box opens on a rubberbanded bunch of diaries made of fake leather.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Michelle's diaries.

She flips open one from 1983. The writing is small and neat.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I had forgotten what a rotten busybody Michelle was... This entry talked about how she heard Miss Berdall saying dirty things to a man on the phone in the teachers' lounge. Miss Berdall wasn't married so Michelle was hoping to get a cupcake once she confronted her.

She closes the diary and looks for other ones. She opens 1984.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I was wondering if she'd written anything noteworthy about Ben.

At the month of November, she finds a red envelope with *STUD* written at the top. Curious, she opens it and finds a note: *Dear Stud, I'm in biology and I'm fingering myself under the desk. My pussy is still red from you. Come over to my house after school, OK?*

DIONDRA

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Weird. Ben hadn't had a girlfriend. Not a single person, including Ben, had ever said so.

She rummages through the boxes and finds a stack of school yearbooks. She opens the one for 1984-1985, scans Ben's class and finds a picture of her brother.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
No Diondra in Ben's class.

She skims through the pages, finding Diondra after a few more. We zoom in slowly on the black and white picture of Diondra's face.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Diondra Wertzner... one class above him. Pretty.

She looks into another yearbook.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I pulled out the yearbook for the previous year, and she wasn't there.

She pulls out another yearbook, leafs through it before closing it, intrigued.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Then I pulled out the yearbook for the following year, and she was gone.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Patty and Diane sit at a desk facing a DETECTIVE at the police station.

Title card: PATTY DAY, JANUARY 2nd 1985, 4:50 PM

DETECTIVE
You have four children, correct?

PATTY
Yes.

DETECTIVE
Same father?

Diane shifts in her seat.

DIANE
Of course same father!

DETECTIVE
But you are a single mother, correct?

DIANE
What's this got to do with what's
happening with Ben?!

The detective sighs.

DETECTIVE
Mrs. Day, we've got four little girls
who say that Ben touched them in their
private areas, that he took them out
to some farm and performed certain...
acts associated with ritualistic Devil
worship.

PATTY
Took them to a farm? Ben doesn't even
have a car!

DETECTIVE
How is he regarded at school? Is he a
popular kid?

PATTY
He has lots of friends.

DETECTIVE
From what we understand, he's a bit of
a loner.

DIANE
So what does that prove?

DETECTIVE
Absolutely nothing. But that, combined
with the fact that he doesn't have a
strong father figure around, would
lead me to believe he may be more
vulnerable to negative influences.

DIANE

We want to talk to a lawyer.

DETECTIVE

Mrs. Day, with three little girls at home, if I were you, I'd want the truth out more than anyone. Your daughters were probably his first victims.

PATTY

No. That's not possible.

The detective speaks more gently now.

DETECTIVE

Satanic worship is not uncommon... It's made its way into all areas of the community, and part of their rituals involve the degradation of children.

DIANE

Do you have any evidence? Any witnesses besides some eleven-year-old girls, and some Harvard know-it-all psychiatrist who impresses you all?

DETECTIVE

We have the notes Ben left in Krissi's bin. If you'd let us look around your home, we could clear up some points.

DIANE

We need to talk to a lawyer before that.

Diane stands.

DETECTIVE

In the meantime, I'd like to talk to your daughters.

DIANE

No you will not. Patty, let's go.

Patty follows her lead, defeated.

DETECTIVE

(louder, as he watches them leave)

Or we could call Child Services!

EXT. OUTSIDE MAGDA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Libby and Lyle are in front of a house with a kitschy front yard. Libby is fascinated by a plaster gnome that seems to be grimacing at her. Sounds of women talking come from inside the house. Lyle rings the doorbell.

LYLE

Libby, you're not gonna enjoy this. I'm sorry.

The door opens on Magda, all dolled up in a loose-fitting dress and lots of jewelry. She stands two heads above Libby. Both women stare at each other. Magda breaks the ice by hugging Libby, almost choking her between her big breasts.

MAGDA

Bygones be bygones. Welcome to my house.

INT. MAGDA'S HOUSE , LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The living room is inviting, lit candles spread all around. A dozen women of different ages are in attendance, one with a baby. Libby looks uncomfortable, sitting as the guest of honor next to Magda.

LIBBY (V.O.)

It was what Diane would call a hen party. Only women.

Said women marvel at the notes and letters Libby has brought, passing them to one another across an embarrassed Lyle. A woman in her mid-forties bursts into tears.

WOMAN IN HER MID-FORTIES

Oh my God...

Libby inspects the note the woman holds in her hand.

LIBBY (V.O.)

A birthday card to Ben from my mom. It reads: "You are growing up before my eyes. One morning I'll wake up and you'll be driving!"

WOMAN IN HER MID-FORTIES

Libby, this is so sad...

Other women come closer, excited, while Libby eyes a small porcelain figurine on a side table.

WOMAN IN HER MID-FORTIES (CONT'D)

I'll give you two hundred dollars for it!

INT. MAGDA'S HOUSE , LIVING ROOM - LATER

Magda stands in the middle of the room, solemnly lecturing Libby.

MAGDA

Libby, we have forgiven you for your part in this fiasco. We believe your father committed this horrible crime. We will now explain to you why.

She inhales deeply, raises her index finger.

MAGDA (CONT'D)

First, motive: two weeks before the murders, your mother filed a complaint against your father for child support.

(MORE)

MAGDA (CONT'D)

For the first time, Runner was going to be legally on the hook to his family... He also had several thousand dollars in gambling debt and was assuming he was still in your mother's will.

Magda raises her middle finger.

MAGDA (CONT'D)

Two, evidence: Fibers from your home were found in Runner's cabin. This has been continually dismissed because he'd been in and out of your house. But none of the victims' blood or tissue was found on Ben.

Magda raises her ring finger.

MAGDA (CONT'D)

Three, opportunity: your father was vouched for by his girlfriend at the time, Peggy Banion.

Libby notices a spindly woman staring at her.

MAGDA (CONT'D)

Libby, just so you know there's no shame in righting a wrong, Peggy here is currently in the process of recanting that alibi. Even though she could be sentenced up to five years.

An older woman cheers.

OLDER WOMAN

Well she won't be. We won't let that happen!

The others applaud. The spindly one, PEGGY, stands up timidly to take Magda's spot.

LIBBY (V.O.)

I could tell Magda watched a lot of Oprah.

MAGDA

Share your story with us, will you, Peggy.

Peggy gathers her strength before declaiming.

PEGGY

On the evening of January 2nd, I cooked dinner for Runner, who, as usual, washed it down with several cans of beer.

LYLE

What happened after dinner?

PEGGY

We, uh, had relations. Then Runner was out of beer, so he left to get more.

(MORE)

PEGGY (CONT'D)
Must of been about eight o'clock
because I watched *The Fall Guy*...

MAGDA
She watched *The Fall Guy*... Isn't that
ironic?

Peggy looks at her, uncomprehending.

PEGGY
Anyway, he didn't come back and I fell
asleep without him around eleven.

LYLE
When did he come back?

PEGGY
In the middle of the night. When the
police came by in the morning, he
swore he was home way before
midnight... I know he wasn't, but I
went along with it.
(lowering her eyes)
I just went along.

The woman with the baby chimes in.

WOMAN WITH THE BABY
Well, you're done with that, girl!

She receives approving cheers. This gives Peggy some courage.

PEGGY
And he had these scratches on his
hands, but I don't remember him
cutting himself that night...

LYLE
They found skin under Michelle's
nails, which makes sense, since she
was strangled. Unfortunately that
piece of skin was lost somewhere
before it ever reached the lab.

Peggy offers an open-handed shrug to conclude.

PEGGY
And that's my story. I haven't heard
from him in two years now. I have no
idea where he is.

Libby considers this.

LIBBY (V.O.)
*I wondered if this woman would have
kept her secret if Runner had just
stayed in touch a bit more.*

She stares at Peggy taking her seat, tended to by three women.

LIBBY (V.O.)
*Then I pictured Runner drunk, his
greasy cap on backwards, aiming a
shotgun at my mother.*

INT. DIANE'S CAR - DAY

CLOSE UP on Patty's face. She just finished crying. Resigned, she looks at the road ahead.

PATTY
I'm a bad mother...

DIANE
What are you talking about? You're a superwoman as far as I'm concerned. You keep the farm going, get four kids to school every day, and don't drink a gallon of bourbon to do it!

PATTY
That cop was right, Diane! If things were different at home, Ben wouldn't be in so much trouble. He's fundamentally a good boy.
(a beat)
Sometimes I think it'd be easier if I disappeared.

DIANE
(curt)
Oh yeah? And what about the kids?

PATTY
You could take them. They'd be better off. I'm just too tired.

Deeply concerned, Diane takes hold of her sister's hand.

DIANE
You said it yourself, you need a fresh start.

PATTY
And I've got a brilliant career as a waitress waiting for me.

DIANE
Many women raise their children on waitress' wages. Patty, you will roll up your sleeves and fight. You will face this mess like the soldier you've always been. I don't know anyone with half your courage. Keep it together for fuck's sake!

Patty, left without an argument, falls silent. She squints as she notices something in the distance.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE DAYS FARM - EVENING

A red sports car, spattered with mud, is parked in front of the house.

INT. DIANE'S CAR - EVENING

Patty and Diane pull up.

PATTY
That's Peggy Banion's car, Runner's
new girlfriend.

Libby comes out of the house, cheerfully holding a half eaten
chocolate donut.

YOUNG LIBBY
Mom, Daddy's here! He brought some
donuts!

Patty tenses up.

DIANE
Do you want me to come with you?

PATTY
No, I'll be fine.

INT. DAYS FARM , LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

On the TV, a nature documentary shows an alligator lunging out
of the water to snap a deer.

Michelle, Debby and Libby SQUEAL with horror. Stuffing their
faces with donuts, the girls are all slouched on the couch next
to their father. Mid-thirties, RUNNER is disheveled, mischievous
and charismatic. He turns to Patty who stands by the door frame.

RUNNER
Heya Patty. Long time no seeya.

Title card: RUNNER DAY, JANUARY 2nd 1985, 6:05 PM

PATTY
Girls, you know you aren't supposed to
let anyone in the house while I'm
away.

MICHELLE
But Mom, it's Daddy!

PATTY
Yes, and Daddy needs to leave.

RUNNER
Jeez, Patty, not even a hi? Come on,
let's talk, I got a business
proposition for ya.

Patty closes the front door, walks to the kitchen.

PATTY
I'm in no mood, Runner. And I'm in no
position to make a business deal.

RUNNER
You're never as broke as you say.

Parting from the girls, he gets up to join her. On the TV
screen, the alligator drags its victim into the water.

INT. DAY FARM , KITCHEN , NIGHT

Patty removes her coat as Runner comes closer.

RUNNER

Vern Evelee told me you just sold the tiller.

PATTY

All that money's gone. It's always gone as quick as I get it. You should know.

RUNNER

I need your help. I just need enough cash to get to Texas.

PATTY

Well I can't help you, I'm sorry.

RUNNER

Come on Patty... I'm in a real jam here. It's life or death stuff.

She sighs heavily.

PATTY

Runner, please... Just come back another time, OK? I got a lot of bad stuff going on right now... Ben's in trouble.

Patty tries to exit the kitchen but Runner blocks the passage.

RUNNER

What the hell did he do?

PATTY

It's bad. He's gonna need a lawyer.

RUNNER

So you do have money.

PATTY

No, I don't.

RUNNER

You got jewelry, dontcha? What about the ring I gave you?

PATTY

The engagement ring? Trust me, if it had been worth anything, I'd have pawned it already.

RUNNER

So now you're gonna be a bitch about the ring too?!

The girls pretend they don't hear their parents' raised voices. Only nosy Michelle turns her head and stares openly. Runner lowers his voice and points to Patty's cross.

RUNNER (CONT'D)
What about that? Those are real rubies, right?

PATTY
My grandmother's cross?
(flustered)
You know how much it means to me, it stays in my family. Now get out of here!

Runner, taken over by a silent rage, grabs Patty's arm with a shaky hand.

RUNNER
You are gonna be really sorry about this, Patty.

PATTY
Been sorry a long time.

She snatches her arm back and heads toward the living room.

INT. DAYS FARM , LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Patty throws the door open, showing Runner out. He puts his cap on backwards, saunters to the door, aware of his daughters watching in horror.

RUNNER
Bye girls. Your mom's a CUNT!

He kicks a chair that cartwheels across the room. He then yells in Patty's face.

RUNNER (CONT'D)
Thanks for FUCKING NOTHING!

He punches the door, exits, stomps toward his car. Patty, shaking, is afraid to look at her daughters who have huddled together. She marches toward her bedroom...

INT. DAYS FARM , PATTY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

... directly to a closet, and fetches a shotgun. Having an obvious ease with weapons, Patty checks that it is loaded and goes to the window in time to see Runner drive off.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. FIELDS - DUSK / B&W

The sun rises on a desolate winter landscape. The image is a gorgeous, Impressionistic Black & White. We make out the grainy silhouette of a man walking toward us. The voice-over is tired and raspy.

RUNNER (V.O.)
Dear Libby, we sure find ourselves in a strange place after all these years.
(MORE)

RUNNER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*Never thought I'd be this old, and
 tired, and by myself. Got cancer. They
 say I only got a few months left...
 all right by me. I've been here longer
 than I deserve anyway. So I was
 excited to hear from you.*

As the man approaches, we are able to discern that he is heavy-built and wearing a thick ranch coat. His face is shadowed under the brim of a Stetson hat.

RUNNER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*Libby, I was very young when we had
 you, and I wasn't the world's greatest
 dad. Your mother made it difficult...
 And then the murders were very hard on
 me.*

CLOSE UP on the man's hand, covered with cuts.

RUNNER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*I need to let you know something, and
 please don't lecture me for not doing
 it sooner.*

The man comes closer, but darkness still conceals his face.

RUNNER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*I know the real killer, and I know it
 wasn't Ben. I will tell the truth
 before I die.*

We realize that the man has no face, just a shadow under a hat. He walks toward the camera until the black hole that is his face swallows the screen.

RUNNER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*If you can send me some money, I'd be
 happy to visit you and tell you more.
 Five hundred should do.*

A scrawled signature appears on the screen:

Runner "Dad" Day

EXT. OKLAHOMA HIGHWAY - DAY

Aerial view of Oklahoma's flatlands. On an almost vacant highway, Libby's car is the only colored point amidst brown and grey.

EXT. OUTSIDE BERT NOLAN'S GROUP HOME FOR MEN - DAY

Libby's knocks at the door of a squatty and square grey building. We hear the sound of the turning latch.

BERT NOLAN (O.S.)
 We don't open for another hour.

The door opens onto BERT NOLAN, a tiny man in his sixties, wearing white sneakers, jeans and a Western shirt. He gives Libby a sympathetic look.

BERT NOLAN (CONT'D)
Oh, sorry honey. We're a men's hostel.

LIBBY
I'm looking for my dad, Runner Day.
Are you the manager?

BERT NOLAN
Manager, accountant, priest... I
remember you, but he's gone again. I
don't allow drinkers here. He just had
his third strike.

LIBBY
Did he say where he was going?

BERT NOLAN
Bet anything he's living at the toxic
waste site.

As Libby doesn't seem to comprehend, the man explains.

BERT NOLAN (CONT'D)
It's an old dumping spot for
grasshopper bait. It's soaked with
arsenic. Just prepare yourself for
some disappointment.

EXT. AROUND THE TOXIC WASTE SITE - EVENING

Libby stands behind a chain-link fence. She peers through it, in shock.

LIBBY (V.O.)
*I wondered what it said about me, that
my own father was living at a toxic
waste dump.*

From her POV, we discover the site. Against the pink light of dusk, shadows move between makeshift shelters. Tiny bonfires flash in the distance.

Libby walks along the perimeter of the fence until she finds a wire-snipped hole. She slips through it and wearily troops toward the lights.

EXT. TOXIC WASTE SITE , CENTER - EVENING

Libby slows down as she reaches the center of the camp. A dozen people sit around a large fire pit, a pot boiling at its center. A TOOTHLESS MAN approaches her, menacing.

TOOTHLESS MAN
Who is it?!

Libby freezes. The man comes closer, followed by three others. One of them passes a torch to the toothless man, illuminating Libby's frightened face.

LIBBY
I'm looking for Runner Day.

TOOTHLESS MAN

Runner? He steal something from you?

LIBBY

No, I'm not upset with him. I'm just his family.

The man stares at her in silence. He points to the direction behind him.

TOOTHLESS MAN

You'll find him over there, at the edge of the camp.

Libby nods and follows the direction without a word. She can see people of all ages hanging out, ignoring her.

She hastens toward a steady glimmer one hundred yards away. As she approaches, she realizes that the light source comes from a large mixing vat, strangely phosphorescent. She looks around, notes that there is nothing else. She walks around the tank, finds a ladder up one side. She can hear movement and bits of conversation echoing from inside.

She begins to climb.

EXT. TOXIC WASTE SITE , RUNNER'S VAT - NIGHT

From the top of the ladder, Libby peers inside the vat. Runner, now old and scraggy, beer in hand, paces back and forth talking to himself. He is surrounded by piles of junk - a washing machine, tires, all kind of stuff.

LIBBY

Runner!

He hawks heavily, looks up.

RUNNER

Whaddaya want? Told everyone no trade tonight.

LIBBY

Runner, it's Libby. Libby your daughter.

He grabs a torch, comes closer. His face twists into a grin as he arrives below her.

RUNNER

Little Libbyyyyy! Well, come on down, sweetheart! Come say hi to your old man.

In order to get in, Libby must jump. She hesitates. Runner holds his arms up to her.

RUNNER (CONT'D)

Come on! You come this far, and now you're gonna be scaredy-scared?!

Awkwardly she lowers herself, but her limbs are not long enough. Her arms begin to shake.

Runner grabs her by the waist to help her in. Instead of releasing Libby, he manically twirls her around like a little girl.

RUNNER (CONT'D)
You remember, when you were young?

LIBBY
Stop it. Set me down.

He laughs.

RUNNER
Say uncle.

LIBBY
Put me down!

RUNNER
Say uncle!

He spins her even faster.

LIBBY
UNCLE!!!

Still twirling, he releases Libby who lands dangerously close to the side of the tank. Practically hyperventilating from laughter, Runner hunches over, both hands on his knees.

RUNNER
Jeez, how long it's been since I seen you? You get that flamingo ashtray I sent?

LIBBY
The one I received when I was a nonsmoking ten-year old?

RUNNER
Nice, huh?

Runner grabs one beer from the dozen sitting on the floor.

LIBBY
Do you remember the letter you wrote me? You wanted to tell the truth about the killings.

RUNNER
Yeah, I wrote you a letter. I'll be dead within the year... So a few things need to be put to rest.

He sits on a beach towel, uses one of the corners to blow his nose.

RUNNER (CONT'D)
It's not like Ben was some babe in the woods. You hang with the Devil, sooner or later you gonna have to pay... Shoulda known when I saw him with that goddamn Injun.

LIBBY

Who?

RUNNER

Trey Teepano.

(smiling)

Boy, people don't know shit about what went on that night. It's hilarious!

LIBBY

It's not hilarious, Runner. Your kids are dead.

He lifts his head.

RUNNER

You're not dead. Don't you ever wonder why?

He spits blood.

RUNNER (CONT'D)

Who ended up with all the money? Sure as hell wasn't me.

LIBBY

What money? We had no money.

RUNNER

Your mom had money. Your Queen Bitch mom...

He gets up, walks toward her, palms held outward in a gesture of peace.

RUNNER (CONT'D)

Where'd all of Patty's life insurance money go, huh? Because I sure as shit didn't get it.

Maintaining eye contact, she retreats.

LIBBY

It all went to defend Ben.

RUNNER

I spent years on that farm and never received a dime! Bitch even asked for alimony!

LIBBY

Did you ask Mom for money that day?

RUNNER

What I'm trying to tell you, little girl... is that Trey was a bookie who needed to be paid.

LIBBY

So... you think he's the killer?

RUNNER

No no, you want everything for free... I told you to bring money.

He grabs her arm.

RUNNER (CONT'D)
You wrote that book... You got money,
don't ya?

She pulls away from him, frantically drags a mini-fridge over to the side of the tank and climbs on top of it. She is still too short to escape.

RUNNER (CONT'D)
Gimme fifty bucks and I'll get you up.

Ignoring him, she stands on tiptoe trying to reach the top of the tank. The fridge tilts beneath her and Libby falls to the ground. She skitters behind the fridge in fear. Runner finds it extremely amusing.

RUNNER (CONT'D)
Jeez, what a mess! You scared of me,
little girl?

She looks around for another object she could climb on.

RUNNER (CONT'D)
I don't kill girls. I would never kill
little girls, if that's what you
think.

He returns to sit on his towel, phlegmatic. Libby watches him open another beer.

LIBBY
Runner, Where were you that night?

He smiles.

RUNNER
Truth is I have no idea. I was shit-
faced that night, totally wasted. I
don't remember a thing.

LIBBY
Ben's been in prison for twenty-five
years and soon, it will be too late.
It's time you start remembering.

Runner searches his memory, furrowing his brows. He latches onto a thought.

RUNNER
Hey, did they ever find Dierdre?

A beat.

LIBBY
You mean Diondra?

RUNNER
Yeah, Di-on-dra! Always wondered if
they killed her that night.

LIBBY
What do you mean?!

RUNNER

Isn't that what they do, those Devil worshippers? Kill pregnant ladies and their babies?

INT. PUB - NIGHT

Ben, Diondra and Trey arrive in a Pub. The place is packed and smoky, country music on the sound system. Trey scans the room, Ben takes in the atmosphere. Every man's head turn to Diondra, who motions with her eyes to someone to the right of her. Runner is talking with a woman in a corner of the pub.

TREY

(over the music)

Hey Runner, c'mere!

A flash of tension crosses Runner's eyes, followed by a fake smile. He approaches Trey.

RUNNER

I don't have it, man, I just don't.
Tried to scrape it up earlier, but...

DIONDRA

(flirtatious)

You're not gonna say hi to me?

Runner pretends to close one eye so he can see better.

RUNNER

Oh, hey Diondra, hehe, wow I must be oblivious! Yeah, drinking myself cross-eyed 'cause I'm so freaked out about this situation.

TREY

Runner, you want to look at who's next to Diondra?

Ben stands there, rigid.

RUNNER

That your cousin? I can't see too well at night.

Trey responds with a snarky laugh.

TREY

Oh shit! Take another look, asshole.

Runner approaches Ben, then it registers.

RUNNER

Ohhh! Hair's not red!

Runner gives Ben a tap on the shoulder.

RUNNER (CONT'D)

(nervous)

Hey Ben. Didn't know you knew Trey.

TREY

I don't get it, Runner. You say you don't have any money, your son here says you don't have any money... and yet, you had that giant stack of weed just a few weeks ago.

Runner gives his back to Ben in an attempt to exclude him from the conversation.

RUNNER

Never charged you nothing.

TREY

That's because you owe me, dipshit. Can't believe this town, man. You guys love to gamble, but you never want to pay.

Runner signals to a man playing pool in the back of the pub. Trey turns around to discover a burly, white-haired man with a US Marine tattoo. The man comes closer, points the cue stick at Trey who acknowledges him and turns back to Runner.

TREY (CONT'D)

(pointing to Ben)

I know someone else who needs money...

Runner frowns, turns to Ben.

RUNNER

You owe Trey money?

Ben tries to keep up appearances while Diondra scoots herself closer to him.

BEN

I owe nobody nothing.

TREY

He wants money for his girl.

Diondra gestures him to shut up. Runner looks at her, focusing on her belly.

RUNNER

Hey, you got yourself a little paunch... Gonna need to give up beer.

The white-haired MARINE interrupts the family reunion, with a look of disdain. He puts a firm hand on Trey's shoulder.

MARINE

Problem, Trey? Runner here, he's good for it. Give him another twenty-four hours, okay? On me.

Trey tightens up. A stare-down.

TREY

Twenty-four hours, Whitey. For you.

MARINE

Appreciate it, Injun.

He winks at Runner, returns to the pool table and his friends, who barely contain their laughter. Trey is incited by this.

TREY
(to Runner, threatening)
This time tomorrow night, here. Or so
help me, I will hurt you.

Runner nods. Trey leads Diondra out of the bar, leaving Ben alone with Runner. He whispers in his son's ear.

RUNNER
Hey son. If it's what I think, just be
sure it's yours.

BEN
What do you mean?

RUNNER
Why would a rich slut like her run
around with a loser like you... Think
about it.

Runner turns away and walks back to his woman, leaving Ben to mill about by himself in the middle of the crowd.

INT. PENITENTIARY , VISITATION ROOM , DAY

In the visitation room, older Ben leans back in his chair, glaring at Libby, barely containing his anger.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
So you're gonna trust Runner over me?

LIBBY
I don't trust anyone. I'm just trying
to understand.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
How much... how much money are you
getting for all this?

Libby is surprised. He gives her a contemptuous smile.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD (CONT'D)
What... you think I didn't know?

LIBBY
No, you're wrong. This isn't about the
money anymore.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
Libby, you can't win this game. If I
tell you I'm innocent, that means you
ruined my life. And if I tell you I'm
guilty, that doesn't make you feel
much better, now does it?

LIBBY
Where is Diondra?

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
Let it go, Libby. She was totally out
of my league.

LIBBY
What'd you do with the baby?

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
What baby?

LIBBY
If you're going to bullshit me, I
don't see the point.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
Libby, drop it... This is not how I
want things to go between us.

LIBBY
What about Trey Teepano?

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
He said what he had to say in the
witness box.

LIBBY
No, that's too easy.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
Listen... Here comes my little sister
after all these years. She sure wasn't
helpful twenty-four years ago, but
hey, I'm over that. Today, I can
forgive you for your past lie, for
getting confused as a kid. But
goddammit! You're a grown up now...
you really believe your own blood
could do something like that?

LIBBY
Oh, I totally believe my own blood
could do that. I've beaten the shit
out of people, Ben, I've busted in
doors and windows, I've killed things!
Half the time I look down, my hands
are in fists!

A beat.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
You believe we're that bad?

LIBBY
I do.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
Even with Mom's blood?

LIBBY
Even with.

A beat.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
Then I'm sad for you, little girl.

INT. DAYS FARM , LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

LATERAL TRAVELLING SHOT from Patty's shotgun resting on the mantelpiece, loaded and ready, to...

INT. DAY FARM , KITCHEN , NIGHT

... the entrance of the kitchen where Patty and the three girls sit around the table. None of them feel like eating. Libby weeps in silence. Patty caresses her cheek.

PATTY
It's okay, sweetheart.

YOUNG LIBBY
No it's not. I want Ben back!

PATTY
He'll come back.

DEBBY
Why can't we find him? Is he in trouble because of his hair?

MICHELLE
No, it's because of sex. Everyone at school knows.

Patty looks at Michelle, dumbstruck.

PATTY
What do you mean?

Michelle lowers her eyes. Patty raises her voice.

PATTY (CONT'D)
Ben is your brother, you don't talk hateful about your brother!

MICHELLE
But Mom, I don't like Ben! He's bad, he does bad things...

Anguish all over Patty's face.

PATTY
Has he touched you in a strange way? A not brotherly way?

Michelle starts weeping too.

MICHELLE
The only time he touches me is when he's pushing me or pulling my hair!

Patty closes her eyes in relief.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

He's a freak, it's embarrassing! Just look in his room, he's got all sorts of weird stuff!

PATTY

You snooped in his room?

Having just implicated herself, Michelle shuts up. Patty takes a moment to contemplate before hurriedly getting up.

INT. DAYS FARM , BEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Patty enters what is an average teenage boy's bedroom, only with outmoded furniture. Ben's desk is littered with notebooks and cassette tapes. She flips through one notebook, discovers that it is filled with metal band logos, pentagrams, horrifying drawings. She keeps leafing through and finds a poem: *The child is mine... But really not... Cuz Satan has a darker plot... Kill the baby and its mother... Then look for more... And kill another.* Patty feels sick, she has to sit down.

She trudges on, riffling through more pages and comes to one with a series of names: *Heather, Amanda, Brianne, Danielle, Nicole, Crystal, Krissi, Chrissy, Krissie, Krissi Day, Krissi D-Day.* The notebook falls from her hands.

PATTY

My God...

A wadded plastic bag under the bed catches her eye. Getting on her knees, Patty pulls it out and opens it. She bursts out crying when she discovers what is inside: little girl clothing. Lost in her tears, she is brought back by the ring of the telephone.

INT. DAYS FARM , LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The girls look worried as Patty charges into the living room, and pitches the bag of clothes into the fire. She picks up the phone.

PATTY

Hello?

JOSEPH (O.S.)

Patty? It's Joseph, from the FHA.

PATTY

Hi Joseph... Listen, I haven't found the money. And it's been a rough day.

JOSEPH (O.S.)

Yes, I heard about Ben. I wasn't going to phone you, but... how should I say this...

(cautious)

Patty, I like you... and I trust you. I may have a solution to your problems.

Patty looks to the clothes burning in the fireplace.

PATTY

I thought we were out of options.

JOSEPH (O.S.)

Not entirely. I... I pray for you.

EXT. PICNIC AREA - NIGHT

A light snow falls over an abandoned picnic area. As headlights come closer, we recognize Patty's car.

INT. PATTY'S CAR - NIGHT

Patty scans the area but sees no one. She parks. Out of nowhere, a MAN raps on her window: he is in his forties, bundled under a thick ranch coat and a Stetson. He motions her to roll her window down.

MAN WITH THE STETSON

Come on, we'll talk up under the shelter.

Title card: CALVIN DIEHL, JANUARY 2nd 1985, 10:45 PM

EXT. PICNIC AREA - NIGHT.

The two figures take refuge under a concrete shelter at the edge of the area. The man is tall and heavy-built. He gets straight to the point, his voice deep and harsh.

CALVIN DIEHL

I hear you got yourself some trouble. About to foreclose on your farm and your boy's gonna be arrested?

PATTY

The police just want to talk to him.

CALVIN DIEHL

No Ma'am. Your son is about to be arrested, and I know what for. In this next year, you will need money so you can keep your children at home... and you will need a good lawyer because you *do not* want your son to go to prison labeled a child molester.

A beat.

PATTY

What do you have to offer?

CALVIN DIEHL

Now I myself was once a farmer... and my daddy before me, and his daddy before him. We been swindled, we farmers. '*Plant fence post to fence post*' they said. '*Buy more land, 'cause they ain't making more of it!*'... Then whoops, sorry we gave you some bad advice.

(MORE)

CALVIN DIEHL (CONT'D)
*We'll just take your farm... Shouldn't
 have been stupid enough to believe us.*

PATTY
 What does this have to do with my son?

He studies her for a moment, silent.

CALVIN DIEHL
 Ma'am, I'm no businessman, I'm no
 judge, and I'm certainly no
 politician. But if you're brave
 enough, I'll give you a real chance to
 help your family.

INT. LIBBY'S CAR - DAY

Behind the wheel, an absent-minded Libby drinks coffee. Her cell
 phone rings. She looks at the screen. The caller ID displays
 LYLE. She picks up.

LIBBY
 Yes.

LYLE (O.S.)
 Libby, I found her! Diondra Sue
 Wertzner, born October 28th, 1967, was
 officially reported missing on January
 5th, 1985, and has never been found.

LIBBY
 Does it mean she's dead?

LYLE (O.S.)
 Well... we can't be sure. What did Ben
 tell you?

LIBBY
 He lied to me.

Libby spots something out her windshield.

LIBBY (CONT'D)
 There's someone in front of my house,
 I'll call you right back.

She hangs up and slows down as she approaches a parked clunker
 of a car.

EXT. IN FRONT OF LIBBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Inside the car, Krissi Cates sleeps in her reclined driver seat.
 Libby's intrigued face is reflected on the window.

INT. LIBBY'S HOUSE , LIVING ROOM - DAY

Libby serves coffee to Krissi, who sits on the couch. She looks
 drained without make up on. She puts out her cigarette in
 Runner's pink flamingo ashtray that is set on the coffee table
 next to the small porcelain figurine from Magda's house.

Libby serves herself a cup, sits in front of her. Krissi looks at her coffee, her angst in strong contrast to Libby's cool detachment.

KRISSI CATES

When I saw your name, on the note...
(she stares at Libby)
I should have recognized you by the
eyes. But your hair's blonde.

Krissi lowers her gaze, takes a sip.

KRISSI CATES (CONT'D)

If that one goddamn lie hadn't come
out of my mouth the first time, my
life would be totally different.

INT. KINNAKEE HIGH SCHOOL , CLASSROOM - DAY / B&W

1985. Young Krissi sits among children her age.

KRISSI CATES (O.S.)

I was a pretty girl, you know. We had
money, I was good in school, good at
ballet...

She stares at Ben who is counseling a boy about his drawing.

KRISSI CATES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Ben did volunteer work. He gave
drawing lessons, he was very talented.

Krissi raises her hand to call him. He comes to her desk,
smiling.

KRISSI CATES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I had a big crush on him. And I knew
he liked me too. Being... you know,
who he was, I think he was flattered.

INT. KINNAKEE HIGH SCHOOL , STAIRWELL - DAY / B&W

Krissi and Ben sit on the stairs, laughing as they munch on
candies.

KRISSI CATES (O.S.)

We started to hang out with each
other...

Young Krissi eyes Ben in a peculiar way.

INT. LIBBY'S HOUSE , LIVING ROOM - DAY

Krissi lights up a bit, raises her index finger.

KRISSI CATES

... and I'm totally serious here, in a
way that wasn't right. I know he was a
kid too, but he was old enough to...
not have encouraged me.

Libby remains stony-faced.

INT. KINNAKEE HIGH SCHOOL , STAIRWELL - DAY / B&W

Back on the stairwell. CLOSE UP on Krissi's lips inching toward Ben's. He doesn't retreat.

KRISSI CATES (O.S.)
In fact, he allowed it to happen.

INT. LIBBY'S HOUSE , LIVING ROOM - DAY

Krissi is lost in her memories.

KRISSI CATES
My first grown up kiss... Only lasted a few seconds. Afterwards, of course, he said we shouldn't do it again, that it was wrong. He kept on writing me little notes, but he refused to spend any time with me. I was furious.

A beat.

KRISSI CATES (CONT'D)
About a week later I went to a slumber party, and I told the girls about my high school boyfriend... All proud, I made up things we did. Sex things.

Libby raises an eyebrow.

KRISSI CATES (CONT'D)
From there, it snowballed. We made up this imaginary world where Ben was a Devil worshipper, killing rabbits and making us eat their insides while he molested us... My mom ended up hearing about it from another mother and...

Tears fall down Krissi's cheeks.

KRISSI CATES (CONT'D)
... she told my dad... They sent me to a child psychologist. He made it impossible for me to tell the truth. He so wanted to believe I had been molested. He told me it would be an act of courage to admit it...

Libby remains perfectly still. Krissi wipes her tears.

KRISSI CATES (CONT'D)
If all the adults thought it was real, then it had to be, right?

Libby contemplates Krissi in silence, mixed emotions just under the surface.

*LIBBY (V.O.)
I remembered Dr. Brooner, the shrink
they assigned me after the murders. He
always wore blue, my favorite color.*

INT. DR BROONER'S OFFICE - DAY

Young Libby sits alongside a smiling man in his forties, wearing jeans and a navy blue shirt. She doesn't speak, eyeing a plate of cookies in front of her.

*LIBBY (V.O.)
And he always gave me treats when I
told him what he wanted to hear.*

CLOSE UP on Libby's hand grabbing a cookie.

INT. DAYS FARM , LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Patty enters the house which is immersed in darkness.

In the fireplace, nothing is left of the children's clothing but a bed of glowing embers. The shotgun still rests on the mantelpiece.

INT. DAYS FARM , PATTY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Patty opens a drawer of her bureau. Sticking her hand in the back, she pulls out a black stocking, from which she recovers a wad of bills. She closes the drawer, leaves the bedroom...

INT. DAYS FARM , HALLWAY - NIGHT

... crosses the hallway, passes Ben's bedroom, the door still open...

INT. DAYS FARM , LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

... and walks back into the living room. She places the bills in an old chest on the coffee table, then wanders to the back of the house.

INT. DAYS FARM , HALLWAY - NIGHT

In the hallway, she stops in front of the girls' bedroom door. She softly opens it and watches her daughters sleeping, silent tears on her face.

EXT. FIELDS CLOSE TO A BARN - NIGHT

A full moon soaks through the clouds. A dozen lethargic cows stand in white fields. Trey's truck is parked nearby, engine off, headlights on.

INT. TREY'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Diondra, Ben and Trey stare at the cows.

TREY
Dio, I need the power in me, I haven't
felt it in too long. And it seems like
Ben might need it too.

On the back, Ben remains strangely silent.

DIONDRA
(to Ben)
You okay, Baby?

BEN
Someone should fucking die.

Title card: BEN DAY, JANUARY 2nd 1985, 11:45 PM

EXT. FIELDS CLOSE TO A BARN - NIGHT

Trey gets out of the truck, folds his seat forward to let Ben out. Ben climbs out rubbing his eyes. He doesn't look well. Trey goes around back of the truck while Diondra rummages under her seat. She pulls out three small tin-foiled packets and joins the boys outside.

BEN
What is that stuff?

TREY
It's Devil rush, ever had it?

Not waiting for an answer, Trey opens a packet, pours the powder into his palm and snorts it. He throws his head back, stumbles a few steps, taken over. When he looks back to Ben, something in his eyes has changed.

TREY (CONT'D)
The fuck you looking at?

Next, Diondra loudly sniffs her packet. It is only a moment before she shrieks and falls to her knees. She throws up uncontrollably. Worried, Ben approaches her.

BEN
You okay?

She gets up, in tears, shoves him.

DIONDRA
My daddy's going to kill me. He will
fucking kill me!

Trey gestures at Ben.

TREY
Stop pussyfooting and do it.

Ben opens the remaining packet.

BEN

Man, I don't know if I need this stuff. I'm fucking hungry, haven't eaten anything today.

TREY

You're gonna need it. Do it.

Ben taps the powder into his hand, timidly inhales, and holds his breath in anticipation. Time is suspended. Suddenly he falls to the ground, his head half-buried in snow. We hear Diondra's warped laughter, hyena-like.

TREY (CONT'D)

Dio, you sure this is the guy that got you pregnant?!

From Ben's POV, the reality looks altered. Trey and Diondra hover over Ben like two specters.

TREY (CONT'D)

It's time you get a certain knowledge, man, feel the power... Soon you're gonna be a dad.

Diondra cackles again. Ben smears his face in the snow, jumps back onto his feet, looking reanimated.

BEN

What the hell is this stuff?

Trey reaches into the bed of the truck, pulls out an axe. He hands it to Ben.

DIONDRA

No, I want the axe!

Ben scrutinizes the dried blood on the blade. Trey hands Diondra a Bowie knife.

TREY

Too heavy for you. Take this.

She throws a hissy fit.

DIONDRA

I don't want the hunting knife, it's too small! Give it to Ben, he's the hunter.

Trey takes her hand, opens it, and gently folds her fingers around the Bowie.

TREY

It's sharp, so don't fuck around.

Last, Trey pulls out a massive pick-axe for himself. He smiles to Diondra.

TREY (CONT'D)

You want to say it?

She nods briskly, sets her knife in the middle of the circle formed by the three of them standing.

Trey puts his pick-axe next to the Bowie and motions for Ben to do the same. Ben piles the axe on top. Next they hold each other's hands and Diondra starts chanting.

DIONDRA

To Satan we bring you sacrifices. We bring you pain, blood, fear and rage, the basis of human life... We honor you, Dark One. In your power, we become more powerful, in your exaltation, we become exalted.

Silence.

TREY

We're going to make your baby a fucking warrior tonight, Dio!

They disband, everyone picking up their weapon. Diondra and Trey approach the cows, followed by Ben who maintains a distance. Trey and Diondra come to a stop.

TREY (CONT'D)

Which one?

Diondra points a finger around - a silent eeny-meeny-miny-mo - and picks the biggest one, a bull.

Ben stays behind. From a distance, he witnesses the strange, macabre dance of Trey and Diondra striking the animals.

TREY (CONT'D)

Come on, Ben, don't puss out on us now!

Diondra turns to him, her face covered with blood.

DIONDRA

Come on, Baby, get your kill! Now you're here, you can't just stand!

Ben doesn't budge, shocked.

TREY

This is your chance, dude. Be a man. You got the mother of your child here watching.

Ben breathes heavily, sweating.

TREY (CONT'D)

You need to let the rage out, it's the key to power... I used to be like you, and I don't ever want to go back there again. Don't be a scared, dickless boy all your life. Aren't you tired of being scared?

Ben can't take the abuse any longer and joins in. Screaming, he raises his axe and lands multiple blows onto an already wounded animal. Diondra watches, transfixed.

DIONDRA
 You're pretty tough when the thing's
 already dead!

Depleted of all anger and disgusted, Ben stops, letting the axe fall alongside him. He looks at Diondra and Trey, then walks back to the truck in silence.

EXT. VIEW OF KANSAS LANDSCAPES - DAY

Successive semi-urban Kansas landscapes: we pass a mall, warehouses, a golf course, more warehouses...

LYLE (O.S.)
 Your brother needs you, Libby.

INT. LIBBY'S CAR - DAY

Libby sits behind the wheel next to Lyle. He looks worried, checking his smartphone.

LIBBY
 No, he doesn't. He's been pretty clear about it.

LYLE
 It's not what you think. The evidence is going to be destroyed. We have to petition the court this week for a writ.

LIBBY
 (surprised)
 Isn't this happening faster than you thought?

LYLE
 A lot of people's careers took off because of this case. A potential review of it puts many ill at ease...

LIBBY
 Look, I'd like nothing more than to make things right, even if it officially proves I'm the biggest bitch that's ever been brought into the world, but... I don't know, it's like he doesn't want it...

LYLE
 I agree. We're missing something.

LIBBY
 Can I ask you?... What is it about this case that obsesses you so much?

LYLE
 It's a mystery with lots of different theories... a fascinating puzzle.
 (a beat)
 Most of all, there is you. And Ben. And Krissi...

(MORE)

LYLE (CONT'D)
kids who started events that became bigger than them, and had major repercussions. And this, I'm interested in.

LIBBY
Why?

LYLE
You ever heard about those wildfires near San Bernardino, in 1999? They destroyed, like eighty homes and about ninety-thousand acres?

LIBBY
I don't know... Seems like California is always on fire.

LYLE
I was the kid who set that fire.

His candor makes her uncomfortable.

LIBBY
Well then shouldn't you have become a firefighter or something, to help "overcome your trauma"?

LYLE
(smiles)
That was kind of mean.

LIBBY
I know, it's in my blood...

The car in front of them has a bumper sticker that reads: **Jesus is my co-pilot**. Alongside the road, cows stand in a field.

LYLE
Libby! We've arrived!

She slams on the brakes, the car skidding a few yards. To their right, stands a big, old, brick building labeled TEEPANO FEED AND FARM SUPPLY.

INT. TREY'S STORE - DAY

Libby and Lyle enter the store. The large place looks worn, free jazz blaring on the sound system. It seems empty. Behind a long counter, a glass cabinet displays rifles.

LYLE
Hello?

No answer. Libby walks through the aisles, finds a man crouched in front of shelving. As she approaches, he stands upright. Tall, muscled, with thick black hair in a ponytail, Trey is now forty-five years old.

TREY - 45 YEARS OLD
Can I help you?

LIBBY
I'm looking for Trey Teepano.

TREY - 45 YEARS OLD
That'd be me.

LIBBY
It's about Ben Day, my brother.

Trey stays silent, then disappears toward a back office. Lyle and Libby look at each other, unsure about what Trey is up to. The music suddenly stops and he comes back.

TREY - 45 YEARS OLD
You're the one who lived? Debby?

LIBBY
Libby. My dad, Runner, said you were, like, a bookie or something back then.

TREY - 45 YEARS OLD
Yup.

LIBBY
And you were into Devil worship.

TREY - 45 YEARS OLD
Yup.

Trey slowly approaches, calm. Lyle takes a step back, cautious. Libby doesn't move.

TREY - 45 YEARS OLD (CONT'D)
Runner owed me lot of money. Still does, I guess. But it doesn't mean I know what happened in your house that night. I been through all this back then.

LIBBY
Your name just keeps coming up a lot.

TREY - 45 YEARS OLD
At the time, Kinnakee was racist as all hell. I got blamed for a lot of shit I didn't do... I did kill those cows though, and I paid for it.
(he smiles, enigmatic)
But I'm reformed now, a good God-fearing Indian.

LIBBY
What about Diondra Wertzner?

A long silence. He sniggers.

TREY - 45 YEARS OLD
Diondra... Your brother was crazy about that girl. Her parents neglected her so she was always creating drama. She'd run away, come home. Total soap opera. I guess this time she ran away for good... You try the white pages?

LYLE

She's been listed as a missing person
for twenty-five years.

Trey shoots a frosty look to Lyle who finds safety in the study
of his shoes.

TREY - 45 YEARS OLD

My guess is she's living somewhere
under one of her crazy-ass names. She
was one of those girls, always trying
to be someone else. One day she'd talk
in an English accent, next day it was
Southern. "I'm Desiree from Dallas,
I'm Alexis from London"... She liked
to give her porn name too.

LIBBY

(taken aback)

She did porn?

TREY - 45 YEARS OLD

No, it was like that game. What's the
name of your childhood pet?

A beat.

LIBBY

Gracie.

TREY - 45 YEARS OLD

And the name of the street you grew up
on?

LIBBY

Rural Route 2.

TREY - 45 YEARS OLD

(laughing)

Well, that one didn't work. It's
supposed to sound slutty, like Bambi
Evergreen. Diondra's was... Polly
something... Polly Palm.

Lyle tenses up. He takes Libby's arm and tries steering her
toward the exit.

LYLE

Well, thanks for your time.

She frowns at him, and he frowns back. Trey remains serene.

LIBBY

Can I give you my number, in case you
think of anything?

TREY - 45 YEARS OLD

No thanks.

EXT. OUTSIDE TREY'S STORE - DAY

Lyle and Libby exit the store and walk to the car.

LIBBY
What's wrong with you?!

Free jazz again blasts from inside the store.

LYLE
Libby, what was the name your brother
had tattooed on his arm?

LIBBY
(comprehending)
Oh God!

LYLE
It was Molly, or Polly, right?

He takes out his smartphone to surf the Internet.

LYLE (CONT'D)
I mean, it can't be a coincidence,
right?

Another car arrives in the parking lot. An elderly couple climb
out of it.

LYLE (CONT'D)
I got it!!!

He shows Libby the screen.

LYLE (CONT'D)
Polly Palm in Kearney, Missouri! The
only one listed in the whole country,
except for a nail boutique in
Shreveport.

EXT. OUTSIDE DIONDRA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Trey's truck comes to a halt in front of Diondra's house.
Diondra and Ben climb out, faces and clothes covered in blood.
They walk silently to the front door while the truck drives
away.

Title card: BEN DAY, JANUARY 3rd 1985, 12:30 AM

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE , BATHROOM - NIGHT

Under the shower, red water pools around Ben's feet. He scrubs
his face, hair, hands, as hard as he can.

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE , LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In the living room, Diondra, wrapped in a bathrobe, sits on the
floor with her dogs, watching a soap opera. The dogs stand and
growl as Ben enters the room.

BEN
I don't feel good... I need to eat
something.

Diondra glares at him with bloodshot eyes, silent.

BEN (CONT'D)

What?!

DIONDRA

You're fucked.

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE , DIONDRA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Diondra presses the play button on her answering machine.

ANSWERING MACHINE - MEGAN (O.S.)

Hey Dio, it's Megan. I'm totally freaked out about Ben Day. Did you hear that he molested all these girls?

Diondra stares at Ben who is frozen. Next message.

ANSWERING MACHINE - JENNY (O.S.)

Hey Diondra, it's Jenny. I told you Ben Day was a Devil-dude... I guess he's, like, on the run from the cops. There's going to be some big conference about it at school on Monday.

Beside herself, Diondra presses the stop button.

BEN

(overwhelmed)

I better go home.

DIONDRA

And leave me here while you go to jail?!

BEN

What do you want me to do?!

DIONDRA

We're leaving town tonight. I have about two hundred dollars left from my parents. How much can you get at your place?

BEN

I don't know. I have some money I've been saving and my mom usually has five, six hundred bucks hidden around. But I don't know where.

DIONDRA

We'll go there... and if we don't see a cop car, we'll sneak in. You get the money, pack some clothes, and then we'll get the fuck out of here.

BEN

And then what? What fucking planet are you on?! Are you even sure the kid is mine?

Diondra slaps his face.

DIONDRA
How dare you?!

BEN
Can you prove it?

Silence. She softens a little, pets him where his cheek is still red from the slap.

DIONDRA
Ben baby, I love you, and you're the father of this child. I swear to God... Get me out of town. Head west. Otherwise you're in jail and I'm dead from my daddy. He'd make me have the baby, and then he'd kill me.

EXT. OUTSIDE DIONDRA'S HOUSE IN KEARNEY - DAY

Close up on a dreamcatcher made of carved animal teeth and feathers, dangling in the wind. Libby's hand is about to touch it but stops at the last moment.

LIBBY (V.O.)
Lyle had reluctantly agreed to drop me off.

Libby stands on the porch of an isolated house, sitting in the middle of an unkempt land. Black woods stand against the setting sun. She rings the bell.

LIBBY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He'd be waiting for me in a Kearney bar... I couldn't imagine a woman who'd been hiding for twenty-five years would be willing to talk in front of a total stranger.

We hear footsteps approaching. The door opens on dark curly hair framing a face that is too tanned and too made-up. Diondra is now forty-two years old.

LIBBY (CONT'D)
You know who I am?

Three squat-leg poodles with sleigh bells around their collars come running out. Libby tenses up while Diondra chuckles.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD
Holy crap, Libby! I always thought some day you'd find me. Smart girl.

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE IN KEARNEY , LIVING ROOM - DAY

Libby sits on a flowered couch in a shabby living room. Next to her, Diondra smokes a cigarette while the dog on her lap licks her perfectly manicured nails.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD
This is all so out of the blue. Why
come looking for me now? I mean... Did
Ben say something to you?

LIBBY
No, he didn't. That's exactly why I'm
here...

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD
And you think once you know the truth,
you'll find peace? Like knowing is
somehow going to fix you?

LIBBY
The only thing I know is that I won't
stop until I find the truth.

Diondra sighs emphatically, pushes the dog away and takes
Libby's hands in hers.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD
I was with Ben that night, we were
going to leave town and he was going
to his house to get some money. An
hour goes by, two hours... Finally I
thought he's lost his nerves and I
cried myself to sleep. The next
morning, when I heard about the
murders...

A beat.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD (CONT'D)
... I packed my bags, left a note to
my father telling him I wasn't his
"little girl" anymore, and I skipped
town for good. Ben never mentioned my
name to the police.

LIBBY
All these years?

Diondra nods.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD
He protected me.

LIBBY
(angry)
So no one but him knows what happened
that night?!

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD
I do think you could find some peace,
if you accept that... I hate to say
this, but whatever happened, and as
much as I loved him, Ben needed to be
in prison. He had something inside him
that wasn't right for the outside
world.

Libby takes her hands back.

LIBBY
You were pregnant. What happened to
the baby?

Diondra doesn't answer.

CRYSTAL (O.S.)
I'm here.

The floor creaks in the doorway. Libby turns her head. Blinded by the rays of the setting sun, she squints to make out the backlit silhouette of a young woman. CRYSTAL has the Day red hair, blue eyes, her skin dusted with freckles.

INT. DAYS FARM , LIVING ROOM , NIGHT

Ben quietly enters the dark living room. Switching a light on, he is surprised to sight the shotgun on the mantelpiece.

Title card: BEN DAY, JANUARY 3rd 1985, 2:15 AM

He glances to the hallway. All is quiet. He rubs his eyes, his forehead still sweaty. He tiptoes into the kitchen.

INT. DAYS FARM , KITCHEN , NIGHT

Ben opens a cabinet, grabs a box of Rice Krispies and pours them directly into his mouth. He is so ravenous that the cereal spills over and onto the floor. Hearing a noise, he stops and returns to the living room.

INT. DAYS FARM , ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Ben almost jumps when he sees Diondra's frame appear behind a window. He motions her to the front door. They whisper.

BEN
Told you to wait for me in the car!

DIONDRA
(wired)
I'm too scared by myself. I hear
voices!

He takes her hand.

BEN
It's that drug... It'll wear off.

INT. DAYS FARM , BEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As he walks up to his bedroom door, Ben notices something. Diondra is extremely paranoid.

DIONDRA
What's going on?

Gesturing her to shut up, he steers her into the room and closes the door quietly.

BEN
Someone's been here.

DIONDRA
Maybe the cops.

He looks under the bed but doesn't find anything.

BEN
I had a present for you, for the baby.
It's not there anymore.

DIONDRA
A present? What was it?

He signals her to hush. A door opens in the house. They hold their breath.

INT. DAYS FARM , HALLWAY - NIGHT

Young Libby, half asleep, walks across the hallway and into Patty's bedroom.

INT. DAYS FARM , BEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben fills a gym bag with clothes and the notebook Patty had read. He reaches into the back of his closet and pulls out some bills hidden in a book. He counts them, disappointed.

BEN
There's less than I thought.

Diondra lies on the bed, stroking her little belly, lost in her world.

DIONDRA
I bet it was Michelle who stole my
present, that nosy bitch.

Ben wipes the sweat off his forehead with his T-shirt.

BEN
(uncomfortable)
This doesn't feel right...

Diondra becomes hyper-aware of a creak outside the room. Ben goes up to the door, opens it abruptly and discovers Michelle standing there, her diary and pen in hand. She stares at Ben then gawks at Diondra's belly.

MICHELLE
I knew it!

Diondra lunges at Michelle, grabbing her hair. Michelle struggles to scream but Diondra places her hand over her mouth, pulling her to the ground.

DIONDRA
Not a word, you little cunt!

Ben attempts to pull Diondra off of her.

BEN
Calm down... Let's talk to her, she'll understand.

Michelle sees an opening and frees herself from Diondra's grip.

MICHELLE
I'm gonna tell Mom!

She runs to the hallway, closely followed by Diondra. Ben trails them...

INT. DAYS FARM , HALLWAY - NIGHT

... and closes the door gently behind, just in time to see Diondra grabbing Michelle, carrying her off to the girls' bedroom. He catches up...

INT. DAYS FARM , GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

... and finds them on Michelle's bed, surrounded by her dolls. Diondra has one hand around Michelle's neck, the other on her mouth. Once again, Ben closes the door cautiously behind him.

BEN
(whispering)
You're gonna wake up the whole fucking house!

Michelle struggles as much as she can. She gouges Diondra's hand with her nails, drawing blood.

DIONDRA
If you think I'm gonna spend my life worried about this little bitch!

BEN
Stop! She won't tell, let her go.

Leaning deeper onto Michelle's neck, Diondra seems possessed. Michelle flails in every direction, her feet hitting the mattress. The struggle wakes up Debby. She rubs her eyes, confused and scared. Ben comes near and signals her to keep mum.

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE IN KEARNEY , LIVING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE UP on a glass being filled with scotch. Libby picks it up and throws it back. Crystal studies her, fascinated.

CRYSTAL
I was never supposed to meet you. I'm a secret, you know.
(glancing to her mom)
A secret love child...

Diondra nods to her daughter with a smile and explains to Libby.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD
Crystal knows the whole story. I tell her everything, we're best friends.

CRYSTAL

I read your book too... I even have a little scrapbook of photos of you all, clipped out of magazines and stuff. It's like a fake family album. Can I call you Aunt Libby?

Libby almost faints.

LIBBY

Can I use your bathroom?

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD

I know sweetie, it's a lot to take in.

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE IN KEARNEY , BATHROOM - DAY

Inside the bathroom, Libby splashes water on her face, dries herself with a small towel.

Her phone rings, LYLE displayed on the screen. She picks up.

LIBBY

Lyle, I told you I'd call.

LYLE

I know, but something's happened, it's all over the news, I need to talk to you!

LIBBY

Not now.

She hangs up and turns her cell off.

She sighs and mechanically looks around: on a stool next to the toilet sits an opened vanity case, its mirror facing Libby. Inside, an assortment of mystical knick-knacks are mixed with beauty products. She considers a small bronze Buddha and is about to pocket it but suddenly stops herself.

A glint of red catches her eye. She brings her face closer: from the side of the mirror, tangled with several necklaces, hangs a ruby cross. Libby freezes. She puts down the Buddha, untangles the chain and turns the cross over to discover an inscription: *Anna Krause*.

LIBBY (CONT'D)

Jesus...

She's startled by a knock on the door. It's Crystal.

CRYSTAL (O.S.)

Libby, is everything okay?

LIBBY

Yes, just a second... Coming.

CRYSTAL (O.S.)

Sorry, but I really need to pee!

Libby is not sure what to do. She flushes, then wedges the cross into her left shoe and opens the door. Crystal, smiling, studies her before entering the bathroom.

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE IN KEARNEY , LIVING ROOM - DAY

As Libby walks back to sit on the couch, Diondra assumes a solemn posture.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD
We really need you to keep this a
secret for us, Libby.

Diondra puts a hand on Libby's knee.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD (CONT'D)
I just can't risk it, them thinking I
was an accomplice or something. You
understand?

LIBBY
Why would they think that?

Silence. The tension is palpable.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD
Would you like to stay for dinner?
There's so much to talk about...

The two women stare at each other. Libby finds it difficult to conceal her nervousness.

LIBBY
Thank you, but someone's coming to
pick me up. I need to go soon.

DIONDRA
Someone knows you're here?

LIBBY
Yes. Lyle and I are investigating this
case together. He dropped me off and
should be back any moment.

Diondra freezes. Libby can't hold back any longer.

LIBBY (CONT'D)
Diondra... are you sure you weren't in
the house, that night?

Crystal reenters, still smiling.

CRYSTAL
Sorry, Libby. I can't stand the idea
of them coming and taking my mom away
from me!

Caught off guard, Libby is smacked across the head by an ancient clothes iron Crystal had concealed behind her back.

INT. DAYS FARM , PATTY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Patty abruptly comes to, eyes open wide.

Title card: PATTY DAY, JANUARY 3rd 1985, 2:30 AM

Patty detects muffled sounds from the girls' bedroom. She checks the time on the alarm clock, gently slides Libby's arm away to slip out of bed. She goes to the door, and slowly turns the knob.

INT. DAYS FARM , LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In the living room, a pair of gloved hands grab the money Patty had left in the old chest on the coffee table.

INT. DAYS FARM , HALLWAY - NIGHT

Patty walks across the hallway toward the living room and notices the light under Ben's door.

PATTY

Ben...

She moves toward the door, when a massive male figure materializes in front of her. Leaving her no time to react, he whips out a long hunting knife and pierces her chest. Taking her in his arms, he whispers in her ear.

SILHOUETTED MAN

Don't worry, it will all be over in about thirty seconds.

As he turns the knife in Patty's chest, the camera stays on her conflicted face. She feebly coughs, blood dribbling from her mouth, as she hears Ben's voice.

BEN (O.S.)

Come on Dio, let her go!

Patty sees Debby running out of the girls' bedroom, disoriented.

DEBBY

Mom, they're hurting Michelle!

From there on, everything goes rapid-fire. The figure turns to camera. It is the man with the Stetson, Calvin Diehl. The sight of Debby rattles him.

CALVIN DIEHL

What the hell?!

He withdraws the knife and Patty drops to the floor. She summons up what little strength she has left.

PATTY

Run! RUN!!!

Debby sprints toward the living room, followed by the man who takes the shotgun off the mantelpiece and aims at her.

PATTY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Please! Please! DON'T!!!

CLOSE UP on his finger pulling the trigger.

INT. DAYS FARM , GIRLS BEDROOM - NIGHT

About to leave the bedroom to check out what is happening in the hallway, Ben hears the SHOT.

PATTY (O.S.)
NOOOOOOOOO!

He steps back, in shock.

CALVIN DIEHL (O.S.)
Why'd you make me do this, bitch?!

ANOTHER GUNSHOT, followed by a final howl from Patty, followed by ANOTHER GUNSHOT.

BEN
Fuck!!!

Completely overwhelmed, he looks at Diondra who is still straddling Michelle.

DIONDRA
What the fuck are you waiting for?! Go see what's happening!

BEN
(indicating Michelle)
Let her go!

Diondra is furious at having to take her hands off Michelle, who is barely conscious.

Ben leaves the bedroom once he hears the front door close.

INT. DAYS FARM , HALLWAY - NIGHT

He discovers Patty's corpse...

INT. DAYS FARM , LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

... then Debby's, in a corner of the living room. He opens the front door, takes a few steps out, discerns a shadow climb in a car and drive away. He remains there for a moment, processing.

When he turns around, Diondra stands in the doorway surveying the carnage, fascinated.

DIONDRA
Holy shit... Maybe we really did summon the Devil!

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE IN KEARNEY , HALLWAY - NIGHT

CLOSE UP on Libby's face, lying knocked out on the floor. She is barely able to pull her eyes open, making out two blurry shapes above her.

CRYSTAL
Mom, I had no choice. When I saw the
cross was gone, I panicked!

She feels Diondra's hands searching her pockets.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD
It's okay, baby. Just go get me the
gun.

Comprehending what is to come, Libby screams. Diondra has her pinned down but Libby wrestles with all her strength, managing to kick Diondra in the face, forcing her to let go.

Libby gets up, makes a beeline to the front door. She finds Crystal in her path, who aims a Colt .45 at her and FIRES.

She misses.

Libby turns around to find Diondra, back on her feet. She waves to her daughter.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD (CONT'D)
Be careful! Gimme the gun!

Libby dashes through the closest door, the one leading to the basement. She loses her footing and falls face-first down the flight of stairs.

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE IN KEARNEY , BASEMENT - NIGHT

As Libby collects herself, she looks up and sees Diondra's contour standing out against the square of light. She aims the gun at Libby who dodges the BULLET. She hurries inside the dark basement, a pile of old furniture. She clears away some junk, slowly pushing forward, trips on something and falls.

Lights turn on. Diondra and Crystal walk down the stairs. Pushing on, Libby makes her way toward an old door in the back.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD
Libby, you can't go very far. Let's
have a talk, shall we?

Libby opens the door and shuts it behind her.

INT. DIONDRA'S HOUSE IN KEARNEY , TORNADO SHELTER - NIGHT

She stands in what used to be a tornado shelter, now just a junk room. A dead end. She pushes everything she can find in front of the door to block it.

CRYSTAL (O.S.)
She's in the shelter! She's trapped!

Libby looks around, sees a faint light coming from the ceiling. She gets closer. It is a ventilation shaft. She immediately stacks up boxes, books, a baby buggy.

Diondra and Crystal try opening the door.

CRYSTAL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The bitch, she blocked it!

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD (O.S.)
Move, let me do it.

Diondra repeatedly SLAMS into the door with her shoulder, progressively jostling loose the pile in front of it. She's able to get an arm in to swipe away some of the stacked items.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Do like me!

Now it is Crystal who uses her arms to gain clearance while Diondra tries kicking her way in.

Out of breath, Libby climbs on the baby buggy to reach the small opening. She heaves herself up, gets one arm through the shaft, then the other arm, looks behind her to find Crystal lunging for her leg.

Having pulled herself halfway out, Libby gouges her nails into the earth, kicking and screaming as Crystal latches on to her leg.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Baby, I can't get through. Take the gun!

CRYSTAL
I can't! If I let go, she'll escape!

Libby hangs on, wriggling for all she's got. Making progress, she feels her right shoe slip away, releasing her from Crystal's grip. Libby hears a big CRASH and the sounds of pain.

She scrambles out.

EXT. BEHIND DIONDRA'S HOUSE IN KEARNEY - NIGHT

Without turning back, Libby runs for the woods two hundred yards away.

DIONDRA - 42 YEARS OLD (O.S.)
Shoot! Shoot in her direction! Hurry up, she's a fast runner!

Libby turns back, sees the short flash of a GUNSHOT coming from the shaft, then ANOTHER ONE, then a THIRD, all of them missing her. Though short of breath, she gains speed and disappears into the darkness of the undergrowth.

INT. DAYS FARM , GIRLS BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE UP on Ben's horrified face.

BEN
Holy shit, Diondra. What have you
done?!

Petrified, he stares at the lifeless body of Michelle.

DIONDRA
She wouldn't shut up. It's her fault!

BEN
(devastated)
We need to call the police.

DIONDRA
Where's the little one?

They hear a sound coming from Patty's bedroom.

BEN
Oh shit! Libby!
(calling out)
Libby?!

Title card: LIBBY DAY, JANUARY 3rd 1985, 2:35 AM

INT. DAYS FARM , PATTY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben enters the room, runs to the open window. He spots Libby's
little body making a dash toward the pond.

BEN
LIBBBYYY!!!

Diondra arrives behind him.

DIONDRA
If she saw something, we've got a
problem.

BEN
Why?

Diondra, frenzied, takes his hands and puts them on her belly.

DIONDRA
Ben, don't you see how all this was
meant to be? You think it's a
coincidence? We do the ritual, we need
money, and pow! Someone kills your
family?

BEN
What are you talking about?!

DIONDRA
You will inherit all your mom's life
insurance! Whatever you want to do,
you want to go live in California, on
the beach, we can do it...

Silence. Something changes in Ben's eyes.

DIONDRA (CONT'D)

If you prefer, I can take care of her myself.

BEN

No... no, I'll get her.

He exits the room. Diondra watches him step over his mother's corpse and disappear into the living room.

INT. DAYS FARM , HALLWAY - NIGHT

Diondra walks through the hallway, carefully avoiding the pool of blood. She kneels in front of Patty's body gripped by her final expression of horror. Diondra touches Patty's cross, fascinated.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE DAYS FARM - NIGHT

Ben walks toward the pond, scanning the area with his flashlight. He follows the small footsteps in the snow leading to reeds. He brushes his flashlight over the tops of the reeds, listens carefully, hears Young Libby's sobs. He directs the light toward the sound and sees a flash of red hair. He looks at it, sad.

BEN

Libby! Stay where you are, sweetheart.
Stay where you are!

He turns to run back toward the house and, through the window, sees Diondra wreaking havoc.

The camera goes through the reeds to reveal Young Libby crying and trembling.

EXT. UNDERGROWTH - NIGHT

Back to present, Libby is terrified. Night has fallen. She hides in an old animal den, under the thick roots of a massive oak tree.

In the distance, we hear cursing followed by the roar of a car engine. She is on high alert, but hears nothing. An orange glow washes over her hiding place, then a crackle.

Libby cautiously peeks out through the trees and distinguishes flames. She hesitates, gets up and walks slowly toward the light.

EXT. BEHIND DIONDRA'S HOUSE IN KEARNEY - NIGHT

As she arrives at the edge of the woods, Libby realizes that the house has become a giant inferno. She hears sirens approaching. She walks around...

EXT. IN FRONT OF DIONDRA'S HOUSE IN KEARNEY - NIGHT

... And arrives at the front of the house at the same time as two fire trucks which are followed by a few cars. One of those is hers. Lyle quickly steps out.

LYLE
LIBBY!!!

She looks at Lyle without registering that it is him. Her knees give way and she falls into his arms.

LYLE (CONT'D)
Libby, what happened?! Are you okay?

She observes the ballet of the firefighters and the good people of Kearney dousing the dancing flames.

LYLE (CONT'D)
Are you hurt?

Libby comes to her senses. She retrieves the cross from her left shoe and shows it to Lyle.

LYLE (CONT'D)
What is it?

LIBBY
It was Diondra... She killed them.

LYLE
(delicate)
I don't think so.

LIBBY
What are you saying?

An ambulance arrives, the firefighters directing it toward Libby and Lyle.

LYLE
That's what I was trying to tell you when I called earlier. You remember the theory the Kill Club had, about this serial killer they coined the Angel of Debt?

She nods.

LYLE (CONT'D)
He's been caught in a suburb of Chicago, nailed in the middle of helping some hedge fund manager stage his death. His name is Calvin Diehl, used to be a farmer who lost everything to the banks after the Soviet embargo.

LIBBY
So what?!

LYLE
He's been at it since the eighties, Libby.

(MORE)

LYLE (CONT'D)
Got paid making suicides look like murders or accidents. He confessed to both Patty and Debby's murders. Your mother had hired him for that night, but something went wrong.

Two EMT's approach.

EMT
Are you okay, Ma'am?

She doesn't answer, looks at Lyle, confounded.

EMT (CONT'D)
Ma'am, talk to me please, are you hurt?

LIBBY
(to Lyle)
Stay with me.

Lyle lets the EMT's do their job.

LYLE
I won't be far, I promise.

EMT
Ma'am, we're going to take you to the County Hospital.

Libby still stares at Lyle.

LIBBY
Stay with me, please.

He nods, reassuring her.

LYLE
I'm not going anywhere.

BLACK.

CBS NEWS SPECIAL REPORT

ANCHORMAN - TODAY
Good morning. Diondra Wertzner, also known as Polly Palm, was arrested last night in Amarillo, Texas.

SPLIT SCREEN: On one side, a picture from Diondra's 1984 yearbook, on the other her mug shot at forty-two years old.

ANCHORMAN - TODAY (CONT'D)
This is the latest development in the 1985 Kansas Prairie Massacre case. Ms. Wertzner was wanted in relation to the murder of Michelle Day, for which Ben Day has been imprisoned for the last twenty-five years.

A recent picture of Ben appears on the screen.

ANCHORMAN - TODAY (CONT'D)
 She still denies any involvement while DNA analysis is pending. Her daughter Crystal is still at large... As a reminder, this is the latest twist in a larger case, that of serial killer Calvin Diehl, aka the Angel of Debt, who has allegedly killed, or as he claims "helped to die in dignity", more than fifty people since the early eighties. He had each of his victims sign what he termed a "Permission To Kill" form, along with a letter to loved ones.

On the screen, a crowd of people demonstrating in front of a jail for the release of Calvin Diehl. We see a sign that reads "*Diehl's the real Deal!*"

ANCHORMAN - TODAY (CONT'D)
 Since these letters were leaked on the internet, some people are making a folk hero out of Mister Diehl, standing up for the little guy against big government and insurance companies.

And lastly on the screen, Lyle. All cleaned up, he is speaking with an air of authority in an overtly macabre setting.

ANCHORMAN - TODAY (CONT'D)
 So don't miss our special "60 Minutes" on Sunday entirely devoted to the case. We have an exclusive interview of the Kill Club founder and national unsolved mysteries' specialist, Lyle Wirth.

BLACK.

PATTY (V.O.)
Dear Ben, Michelle, Debby and Libby...

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Standing in a supermarket aisle, Libby skims through the hair dye section.

PATTY (V.O.)
I don't think this letter will ever reach you, but Mr Diehl said he'd hold it for me, and I guess that gives me some comfort. I don't know.

Libby's hand hesitates between two hair dye colors: blonde, or red.

PATTY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Your grandparents always told me, Make a useful life. I don't feel I've really done that, but I can make a useful death.

INT. LIBBY'S TRAILER , BATHROOM - DAY

CLOSE UP of Libby mixing hair dye and water. Next, her gloved hands apply the mixture onto her hair.

PATTY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
My life has been determined so much by accidents, it seems nice that now an "accident on purpose" will make things right again. A happy accident. I'm proud in a way. I hope you all forgive me.

Libby rinses her hair, the residue dye going down the drain.

PATTY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Take good care of each other, I know Diane will do right by you. I'm only sad I won't get to see what good people you become. Although I don't need to... That's how sure I am of my kids.

BLACK.

A handwritten signature appears on the screen:

Love you, Mom

INT. PENITENTIARY , VISITATION ROOM , DAY

Behind the glass screen, Ben looks tired. He smiles timidly.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
 Now you really look like Mom.

Facing him, we discover Libby. Her hair is red.

LIBBY
 I'm not the only one who looks like her. You'd be surprised.

He lowers his eyes.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
 Diondra was always sure you'd find her out. She was always sure of it. Guess she was right.

LIBBY
 Guess she was.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
 I'm sorry, Libby.

A beat.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD (CONT'D)
 When I think about that boy... me, sixteen-year old Ben. He's like my son. I want to strangle that kid. That worthless little coward.

Libby is cold and distant.

LIBBY

Me too.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

But I can't do anything about it. The past is something I can not change... And I spent 24 years regretting it. 24 years shutting up and taking it.

LIBBY

24 years choosing Diondra over me, your own blood.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

No, 24 years protecting my kid.

LIBBY

By leaving her with a murderer?

Silence.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

You have every right to hate me. And I don't expect forgiveness from you.

LIBBY

You don't need my forgiveness. The blood on Michelle's sheets will talk and you'll be out of here.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

Yes, and I wouldn't mind that. But my freedom means nothing without you, Libby.

LIBBY

Words...

Ben sighs.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD

Then what are you doing here? I mean, you came back. Why? I doubt I could say anything that'd make you feel better.

LIBBY

How do you know how I feel?

BEN

I don't. But I sure know how *I* feel.

Libby looks at the people around them: all the booths are occupied by wives, mothers, sons and daughters.

LIBBY

As much as I hate you, as much as I despise you for what you did... You're the only thing I have left in this world.

He presses the phone closer to his ear.

LIBBY (CONT'D)
And I don't want our past to drive our
lives anymore. I just want us to be
like normal people.

A beat.

LIBBY (CONT'D)
You think we can do that?

Ben takes his time to answer.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
I don't know. You think we can do
that?

LIBBY
I think we can try. I think life has
been hard on us. I think we deserve a
second chance.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
What about Crystal?

LIBBY
More than anyone, she deserves a
second chance.

A beat.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
She was a sheltered kid, she can't
disappear for too long. I could find
her and take care of her.

LIBBY
And I'd turn a blind eye to that. She
won't go to jail because of me.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
You'd really give her a pass?

LIBBY
I know a little bit about people
trying to do the right thing and
fucking up completely.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
You talking about me or Mom?

LIBBY
I was talking about me.

A beat.

BEN - 41 YEARS OLD
You could have been talking about any
of us.

Affected, Libby acquiesces. Ben presses his hand against the
glass. Libby hesitates. Ben leaves his hand, stoic...

Silence. Her palm finally meets his.

INT. LIBBY'S CAR - DAY

Behind the wheel, an exhausted Libby is lost in daydreams.

*LIBBY (V.O.)
I felt empty. I didn't get straight on
the highway but slowly drove to where
our farm had once been.*

EXT. SITE OF THE DAYS FARM - DAY

Libby's car drives up to the house, now repainted and well kept. In front of it, a little girl jumps rope. On the mailbox, an inscription: "The Muehlers". A man walks the fields.

*LIBBY (V.O.)
I studied it all for a few minutes,
keeping my head steady, staying away
from Darkplace... No screams, no
shotguns, no wild bluejay cries...
Just listening to the quiet.*

The little girl, noticing the car, calls the man, her father. He sees her and waves. Libby waves back, but pulls away as he starts to wander over, neighbour-like.

*LIBBY (V.O.)
I didn't want to meet them, and I
didn't want to introduce myself... I
just wanted to be some woman...*

The man and the little girl watch the car fade away in the horizon.

*LIBBY (V.O.)
Some woman heading back home.*

END CREDITS